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In Search of Identity

The Hadhrami Arabs in the Netherlands East Indies and Indonesia (1900–1950)

Huub de Jonge

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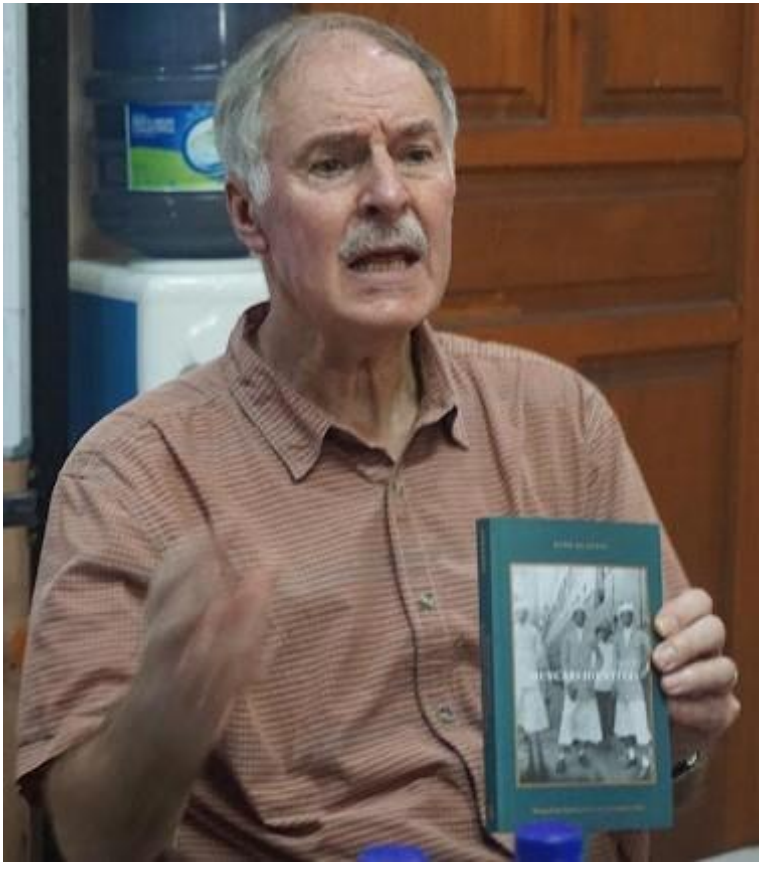

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By

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Preface

Until the end of last century, the Hadhramis in Indonesia were hardly studied, although their age-long presence had not remained unnoticed. They are the only foreign Muslim population group with roots in the Middle East in a country that has the largest number of Muslims in the world. This gives them a special, although not always undisputed, position in their host country. Furthermore, since their arrival, they have asserted themselves as shrewd traders and businessmen in almost all parts of the archipelago. During the colonial period, their religious and economic activities regularly caused resentment in government circles. For these reasons alone, it is incomprehensible that the Hadhrami diaspora in the Netherlands East Indies and Indonesia has long been ignored by historians and anthropologists. In the past, only a few Dutch oriental scholars showed interest in the background and activities of this migrant group, at the invitation of the colonial government.

An important turning point was the international workshop on the migration of Hadhramis across the Indian Ocean held in London in 1995. In the following years, other international conferences dedicated to the Hadhramis were organized in Leiden (1997), Osaka (2001), Kuala Lumpur (2005), Vienna (2009), Singapore (2010) and Jakarta (2017). The conferences and the resulting publications were not only a sign of the growing scientific interest in Hadhramis, but also served to encourage students and scientists in different countries to conduct research about this population group.[1] This has led to long-term scientific contacts and sometimes even friendships between participants from all over the world. I have myself learned much from the writings of and contacts with, in particular, Syed Farid Alatas, Omar Farouk Bajunid, William G. Clarence-Smith, Ulrike Freitag, Engseng Ho, Nico Kaptein, Sumit Mandal, Yasmine Shahab, and Martin Slama. Their publications on Hadhramaut and the Hadhramis in Southeast Asian countries, such as Malaysia, Singapore and Indonesia, all contribute to the overall goal of reaching a better understanding of the dynamics of Hadhrami culture and society in the South Arabian homeland and beyond.

The growing international interest in the Hadhramis has also had a positive influence on the study of Hadhramis in the Netherlands East Indies respectively Indonesia by Indonesian researchers. At the above-mentioned conference in Jakarta, dozens of papers were presented on topics related to the Hadhrami

1 The Indonesian publication is still in progress.

minority. Several Ph.D. theses on the Hadhramis appeared to be in progress at universities within and outside the country. The conference was also attended by scholars from different Middle Eastern countries, including a delegation from Hadhramaut that, despite the troubles in Yemen, was able to travel to Indonesia via neighbouring Oman.

This increased interest is also evident from the recent founding of Menara, a study and research centre by young Hadhramis, which aims to preserve the material and immaterial cultural heritage of the Hadhrami community in Indonesia. The driving force behind this centre is Nabiel A. Hayaze, who has dedicated himself to publishing selected writings of prominent Hadramis from the first half of the twentieth century. Another sign of the growing interest was the Hadhrami Festival held at the Universitas Indonesia in May 2018, where the launch of a bilingual edition of the long-lost text of Hoesin Bafagih's play *Fatimah* was used to discuss the significance of the Hadhrami culture for the Indonesian society at large.

It is hoped that this trend will continue, as much research remains to be done. For example, there are but a few studies on the Hadhramis in the so-called Outer Islands of Indonesia and on this population group in the post-war period, the years since Indonesian independence. Especially the role of the Hadhramis in the economic and political fields has not been studied sufficiently. There is also a lack of community studies focusing on Hadhramis living in pre-war Arab quarters and post-war Arab neighbourhoods. The time is ripe to study these and other topics, not least because Hadhramis are more than ever gaining prominence in various fields of society. After being present for more than 150 years, they are now seen as compatriots by the Indonesian population, although they have not given up their ethnic identity.

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Introduction

This book consists of a number of articles I have written about Arabs, or more precisely Hadhramis, living in the Netherlands East Indies and Indonesia between roughly 1900 and 1950.[1] The articles deal with changes in the identity of Hadhramis born and raised in the Dutch colony and the first years after Indonesian independence in August 1945. Already in the first decades of the twentieth century, the Hadhrami community in the Indies had become the second largest foreign Asian minority, albeit far behind the first largest foreign Asian population group, the Chinese. It also became the largest Hadhrami minority of Southeast Asia.

The Hadhramis originate from Hadhramaut, a region in the eastern part of Yemen along the south coast. From times immemorial it has been a poor and underdeveloped area, which greatly depends on revenues from outside. The region has a long migration tradition. In the course of time, inhabitants have migrated to all kinds of destinations on both sides of the Indian Ocean. Long before the advent of Islam, there were trade contacts with ports along the Indian and East-African coast. During the time Western powers were colonizing areas along these coasts, small Hadhrami trading communities existed already in important harbours and in commercial centers inland. After the opening of the Suez Canal and the advent of steamships, migration to Southeast Asia, in particular to the Straits Settlements Singapore, Malacca, Penang and, last but not least, the Netherlands East Indies, soon started to surpass the other migration routes. In the slipstream of this long-distance migration, also the short distance migration from Hadhramaut to places around the Red Sea and to the Hijaz increased. The growing number of hajjis and students from faraway places who came to the Middle East opened new possibilities for migrants desperate for work, business and trade (Boxberger 2002, 48–49; Manger 2010).

In all places where the Hadhramis settled down, they had to adjust to local circumstances to a certain extent. This was in particular true if they established themselves for a long time or even permanently abroad. The degree of leniency or adaptation varied from country to country and from region to region. Also, ports had often different rules for foreign inhabitants. In the Netherlands

1 An Indonesian version of this book, with a different foreword and introduction, was published under the title *Mencari Identitas: Orang Arab Hadhrami di Indonesia* (*1900–1950*) by KPG (Jakarta, 2019).

East Indies, both the settlement and mobility of foreign Asians, such as the Chinese and Arabs, were subjected to stringent regulations by the authorities, in particular between the middle of the nineteenth century and the end of the second decade of the twentieth century. It did not stop the Hadhramis, however, to migrate to this colony for shorter or longer periods of time. The advantages, opportunities, and prospects exceeded to a large extent the disadvantages, insecurities, and risks. Besides, as people with an outsider status or liminal position in the country of arrival, they often did not shy away from evading or ignoring rules that were considered to be unfair in those years. Despite the obstacles created by the authorities, it was much easier for them to make a living in the comparatively rich Indies than in their poor homeland.

The favourable assessment of the economic possibilities in the Indies appears from the steady increase of the Hadhrami minority in Java and on the so-called Outer Islands. Increasing numbers of migrants from Hadhramaut made their way to the Indonesian archipelago, married there (again), and eventually decided to settle there for good. Initially they married with local Indonesian women, as women from Hadhramaut were not allowed to join their husband, father or other relatives on these long-distance journeys. In due course of time, however, as the number of descendants of these mixed marriages increased, marriages with local women of Hadhrami descent became the norm. The preference of both the newly arrived migrants and the established Indo-Hadhramis to marry within their own circle, in combination with Hadhrami patrilineal descent, contributed to the continuation and consolidation of the Hadhramis as a distinct ethnic group in their host country, just as the discriminatory treatment of foreign Asians by the colonial administration did.

These developments strengthened the not unusual tendency among people living in diaspora to maintain the social structure and cultural tradition of their homeland as long and as much as possible. Both the traditional rigid descent-based class system and gender relations of their desert society made that the Hadhramis strongly distinguished themselves from other population groups in the country. Despite the contacts they initiated in the society at large, primarily in the economic field and to a lesser degree in the religious field, they were for a long time a strongly inward-looking community that lived according the Hadhrami norms and values. The Hadhramis hardly let outsiders in, with the exception of female marriage partners in certain circumstances, who were then treated in the same way as women in Hadhramaut itself.

This did not mean that nothing changed in the relatively closed Arab minority. On the contrary, already in the second decade of the twentieth century tensions started to arise in the Hadhrami communities, in particular in Java, where the greatest part of the Hadhramis lived. The Hadhramis born in the Indies

began to outnumber the Hadhramaut-born Hadhramis and an increasing number of them found it difficult to accept the dominant role of newcomers from Hadhramaut in all kinds of societal fields within their community. Moreover, a split emerged between the upper and lower classes, as members of the lower social strata realized that the existing social structure and traditional culture impeded their development in the Indies. Opportunities that arose were left unused or activities criticized when they undermined the traditional order. Both dividing lines intersected: each class consisted of newcomers and Indo-Hadhramis and among both the newcomers and Hadhramis born in Indonesia one could find people from all classes. The differences in opinion led to increasing controversy and debate within and between the different parties involved, in particular during the 1930s. Even within families opposing views were not uncommon, as a grandfather born in Hadhramaut and his Indonesian born children and grandchildren substantially differed in background, way of life, orientation and position.

Differences of opinion and conflicts took place in almost all fields of society in the Hadhrami minority and over time led to significant, not to say far-reaching, changes in national, economic, social, cultural, religious and political identities. The scale and nature of these changes were determined to a large extent by the interplay of several factors, such as the Dutch colonial policy towards Asian immigrants, the commercial and religious contacts the Hadhramis had with members of indigenous population groups, the glimpses they got from the modernization process that took place in the cities they lived in, the degree of contact with the land of their forefathers and with Hadhrami diaspora communities abroad, as well as the intricate and poignant relationships within the overpopulated Arab quarters.

Together these changes in identity can be seen as exponents of processes of integration and civilization. In particular, among progressive Hadhrami organizations and movements, the strive for integration in the wider Indonesian society went hand in hand with the aim to end the relatively disadvantaged and isolated position of the Hadharami minority. Surprisingly, these changing identities did not pose a threat to the existing ethnic identity. The Arab or Hadhrami identity did not disappear, but was so to say substantiated differently over time. It remained the overlapping or main intersecting identity for multiple old and new identities. Even the ethnic and national Indonesian identity proved to be compatible in the long run.

Remarkably this quest for integration and development did not immediately have a substantial impact on the relationship between Arabs and other population groups. It was for a long time a one-way process. Indonesians, (Indo-) Chinese, and (Indo-) Europeans continued to see their Arab compatriots as

foreigners. The vast majority of them did not know where they originally came from and were completely unaware of the social and political changes they had gone through.

During the Japanese occupation and after Indonesian independence this perception did not change immediately. Successive Indonesian governments even contributed to this situation by classifying Arabs as 'not original Indonesians'. Only during the presidency of Abdurrahman Wahid (1999–2001) did the inhabitants of Hadhrami descent get the legal status of Indonesian. It was the delayed seal of a process of integration that in the meantime had reached a very advanced stage. Although nowadays Arabs are definitely seen as fellow countrymen, they still succeed in maintaining their ethnic identity.

By relating the internal developments in the Hadhrami minority to changes in the wider society during the last phase of the Dutch colonial rule, the Japanese interregnum and the first Republican years, I hope to shed more light on the search for identity among the Hadhramis in the first half of the twentieth century.

1 Studies on Indonesian Hadhramis

For a long time, scientific interest in the Hadhramis in the Netherlands East Indies paled into insignificance in comparison with the attention given to the largest group of foreign Asians, the Chinese. From the start of the increasing immigration of Hadhramis from about the middle of the nineteenth century until the independence of Indonesia in 1945, only a few studies were published. In 1886, a monograph on the Hadhramis in the Indonesian archipelago was published by the oriental scholar Van den Berg, commissioned by the colonial government. At the end of the 1950s, long after they had been written between 1889 and 1936, the solicited and unsolicited recommendations of the Islam scholar and advisor to the colonial government, Snouck Hurgronje, appeared (Gobée and Adriaanse 1957–1965, II: 1510–1751). Although they consist mainly of political advices, they contain unique data on the historical background and the socio-cultural characteristics of this Arab population group in their home and host land.

Additionally, after Indonesian independence, for decades there was hardly any interest in this minority. Only in the 1990s, more than a hundred years after the publication of Van den Berg's pioneering study, did research on the Hadhramis in the Indonesian archipelago get underway. In particular, the book edited by Freitag and Clarence-Smith (1997), which contained the results of the first international conference on Hadhramis, was a watershed. It is the first pub-

lication about the Hadhrami diaspora in an international perspective or, more accurately, in an Indian Ocean perspective. It focuses on the migration from Hadhramaut to areas along the Indian and African coast and to Southeast Asia. The book put the Hadhramis on the map and is widely regarded as a standard work.

After this first meeting, five new international conferences about the Hadhramis were organized over a period of fifteen years, the results of which were also published in book form. The contributions in De Jonge and Kaptein (2002), Abushouk and Ibrahim (2009) and Alatas (2010) are entirely devoted to the Hadhramis in Southeast Asia. The publication of Usuki, Bajunid and Yamagishi (2003) compares the migration tradition of the Hadhramis with that of several other populations in the Middle East, especially Palestinians, Lebanese, and Iranians. Slama and Heiss (2011a, 231–380) compare Hadhrami communities in Southeast Asia with Syro-Lebanese communities in the New World.

Together, these publications contain a wealth of data and ideas about the Hadhrami diaspora. As far as Southeast Asia is concerned, the focus is primarily on the Malay world—Indonesia, Malaysia, and Singapore—where most migrants settled over time.[2] They provide information on a wide range of topics. Besides similarities, there appear to have been major differences between diaspora communities in different countries, regions, and islands in this part of the world.

Several authors have tried to explain how Hadhrami communities, especially in Indonesia, have survived and how Hadhramis have managed to maintain their own identity in Malaysia and Indonesia for centuries. Alatas (1997, 28–29) regards the Hadhrami diaspora as an assimilated transnational community with its own cultural identity. According to him, the Hadhrami identity is "neither national or ethnic, but kinship based." In particular, it is the lineage structure that ensured *asabiyya*, group solidarity, that shaped it. This type of identity still exists, albeit in a different and less conspicuous way in Malaysia and Singapore than in Indonesia. Freitag (2009, 17–32) also attributes the longevity of the Hadhrami diaspora to *asabiyya*, primarily among *sayyid*, those who claim to be descendants of the Prophet, but also points to the habit of marrying local women. Also of great importance is the resilience of the Hadhramis in comparison to other migrant populations and the regionalization of their economic activities. They were mainly active at the local level, but were able to make use of a widespread national and international Hadhrami network at will. For this reason, Freitag prefers to define the diaspora settlement as a translocal community.

2 For information on Arabs in mainland Southeast Asia, see Bajunid (1996).

Slama and Heiss (2011b, 241–246) reflect on the factors that influence identity in the host country. They highlight, for example, the impact of internal divisions brought by migrants from Hadhramaut, the way the homeland is remembered and represented, the successive regime politics in their new environment, as well as the controversial role Hadhramis play in the economic sphere and accompanying stereotypes. In particular, the religious and educational institutionalization of the diaspora, not seldom influenced by international developments, is seen as crucial to the consolidation or transformation of identity.

The ethnic identity of the migrants who followed the trade routes along the Indian Ocean rim and settled in coastal communities was as a matter of fact not always that clear until the heyday of colonialism. Fluidity, hybridity, and creolization characterized diaspora communities for centuries, as Ho (2002) shows on the basis of a small number of politically successful Arabs in eighteenth century maritime Southeast Asia. Feener (2004, 345), who studied travelling Muslim scholars along the coasts of the Indian Ocean, confirms this observation and states that "ethnic origins and identities were constantly being made, unmade and remade."

The conferences and their results became important sources of inspiration for further research. Before the end of the century, Mobini-Kesheh's (1999) study of the reformist organization Al-Irsyad was published. Founded in 1912 in Batavia by prominent non-*sayyid*, Al-Irsyad fought for the "awakening" of the lower Hadhrami classes as no other Hadhrami organization did before World War II. It strived for a more egalitarian society as well as a purer Islam, and, in particular, challenged the dominant position of the *sayyid*. The organization made its presence felt mainly in the fields of religion and education. Its activities put pressure on the relations between the *sayyid* and Irsyadis.

Ho (2006) elaborated on his earlier ideas about creolization in a comprehensive study, describing how over a period of about five centuries, a variety of ties between the homeland Hadhramaut and the Hadhrami diaspora in Southeast Asia, including primarily genealogies of *sayyid*, and representations of this interconnectedness in textual form, such as poetry, literature, biographies, religious writings, travelogues, help to shape the hybrid identity of members of Hadhrami communities overseas.

In a recent study, Mandal (2018) describes how, in the course of the nineteenth century, in coastal trading communities, particularly in the Netherlands East Indies, where ethnic borders were not always easy to identify, a Hadhrami Arab identity prevailed among descendants of Muslim immigrants as a result of the process of racialization initiated by the colonial government. It meant that the colonial social order and its legislation, attitudes and perceptions became increasingly race-based. Internal dissension in Hadhrami

circles after 1900 unintentionally made the racial borders of the minority even stronger rather than weaker.

In the last decade, more attention has been paid to the Hadhramis on the so-called Outer Islands in Indonesia. Jacobsen (2009) depicts the general characteristics of the numerically small Hadhrami communities on Bali, Lombok, and Sumbawa. In many ways they are not different from the local population, but have maintained their Hadhrami identity, mainly by marrying within their own group. Slama (2011) makes it clear that the restrictive regulations regarding the Hadhramis in the colonial period on Sulawesi were not as strictly observed and monitored as on Java. As a result, relationships between Hadhramis of different classes and between them and local Indonesian populations are much closer to this day. The author illustrates this with the popularity of Al-Khairaat, a Hadhrami educational organization founded in 1930, which now manages more than 1,200 schools in Eastern Indonesia. Its students, teachers, and board members all come from *sayyid*, non-*sayyid* and local Muslim backgrounds. Because of its highly respected status, Al-Khairaat has managed to play a decisive role in curbing the rise of radical Islam in Sulawesi between 1998 and 2005.

The most extensive study of Hadhramis outside Java is that of Istiqomah (2019) on Ambon. She describes the Hadhrami community on the island as an "heterogeneous imagined community" in which ethnicity, religion, descent, and gender are intertwined. In her ethnography, she elaborates on the position of women in the Hadhrami minority. She shows the importance of matrilineal relationships in the patrilineal descent system and makes clear how women manage to stretch and circumvent the strict marriage rules. She also describes how a small but growing number of women have gained access to previously inaccessible public domains.

Earlier, Slama addressed changes in the identity of modern Hadhrami women. In 2012, he drew attention to Hadhrami women's recent agency in bringing about radical changes in the gendered organization of their community, in which women are traditionally housebound and have no role at all in public life. Only after the beginning of *Reformasi*, after the fall of the Suharto regime, and the increasing Islamization of Indonesia, did a gradually growing number of educated Hadhrami women succeed in finding jobs in the business and professional realms. However, their presence in these fields does not lead to a breakthrough in unequal gender relations in the domestic sphere. By emphasizing the male's dominating position in marriage on primarily Islamic grounds and redefining the household as a "realm of piety," both the private and public domain can be unified to a high extent. The shifts in female identity ascertained by both Slama and Istiqomah in and outside Java can without doubt be called revolutionary.

In 2014, Slama adressed a recurrent divisive issue in the Hadhrami diaspora: marriage between an upper-class woman (*sayyidah*) and a lower-class man. The *sayyid* experience such a marriage as a catastrophe, which in their eyes can be compared to no other crisis. A difference with the past, however, is that more and more well-educated young Hadhrami women no longer leave the choice of a marriage partner to their parents, but take matters into their own hands. Through the internet, they are able to increase the number of suitable candidates from which they can choose remarkably. Some even no longer shy away from marrying a non-*sayyid* or, not as bad, a non-Hadhrami. It appears that the public commotion about an unwanted marriage is the greatest in times of severe tensions between developments in Hadhrami circles (such as the rise of radical Islamic organizations) and changes in the wider society (such as the emergence of democratization and decentralization processes).

The past years, several studies have been published on long-term changes in Islamic identity under Hadhramis in the Indonesian archipelago. Laffan (2011), in his wide-ranging study of Islamization in Indonesia, mentions more than once the role of Muslim leaders of *sayyid* origin in earlier centuries. In the final section, on the period 1905–1942, he describes the rise of parallel reformist developments in both Hadhrami and wider Indonesian circles. The encouraging way in which colonial advisors for Native and Arab Affairs (later only called Native Affairs), "acolytes" of Snouck Hurgronje, reported about Islamic modernism, especially in Hadhrami circles, aroused great resentment under conservative colonial civil servants. The position of the advisors led to serious complaints from prominent *sayyid* who saw their loyalty to the colonial government betrayed.

Kaptein (2014) wrote a biography of the Batavia born Sayyid ʿUthman (1822–1914), who after a long period of study in Mecca and Hadhramaut became the most important Muslim scholar in the East Indies in the second half of the nineteenth century. He was very loyal to the colonial government and in 1891 he was appointed Honorary Advisor for Arab Affairs, although in reality he was more concerned with Islamic than with Arab affairs. He was in many ways a traditional oriental scholar with *sayyid*-friendly views and disliked Islamic modernism. Within the Arab minority, he defended the interests of the *sayyid*, whose exalted position could not be disputed, but who also had the responsibility to behave in accordance with their status.

The most detailed study on the makings of Islam by Hadhramis is written by Alatas (2021). It deals with the way *sayyid* acquired religious authority and cultivated religious communities since the eighteenth century. Their religious authority is based both on their genealogical and spiritual connection to the Prophetic past and on the hierarchical relationship that allows them to

articulate the Prophetic teachings to others. Differences in what the author, following Louis Althusser, calls 'modes of articulatory labour' of religious leaders, led over time to a variety of Islamic communities in Java. It is especially the sunna—words, actions, and habits of the Prophet—which, depending on the time and local circumstances, offered opportunities for divergent interpretations. In the first part of his study, Alatas discusses the religious communities that developed around a saint, sultan, *mansab* (head of a saintly house) or mystical leader in the past. In the second part, he focusses on the career of a well-known, but controversial contemporary Sufi master from Pekalongan, Habib Luthfti, who in an unusual and unscrupulous way—through circuitous education, genealogical adoption, and close contacts with government and military leaders—created an extensive religious community.

Luthfti is not the only religious leader of Hadhrami origin to have a large following in today's Indonesia. Across the country today, *habib* with different religious views are still active as preachers. While their status often reflects the Hadhrami community, opinions among the Hadhramis themselves about their activities vary widely.

2 Data Collection

For the collection of data for this book about the years 1900–1950, I mainly studied written sources, such as scientific publications, archival documents, Indo-Hadhrami periodicals, and Dutch-language newspapers published in the Indies, as well as Japanese and Indonesian newspapers in the Malay language. Malay was the forerunner of the official Indonesian language.

In the pre-war years many periodicals were published in Hadhrami circles. Most of them had a small number of readers, had a short life span or came out irregularly; others with a larger readership lasted longer, but seldom more than a few years. Most of them were published in Arabic, but quite a few, and not the least, appeared in Malay (Mobini-Kesheh 1996). The periodicals in Arabic were mainly published by conservative organizations, the ones in Malay by their progressive counterparts. By reading Malay language publications, progressive Indo-Hadhramis emphasized that they were children of the country. Less and less Hadhramis used Arabic as a daily language. Among those born in Indonesia, the Arabic language was already soon replaced by the local language, such as Javanese, Sundanese or Madurese, and by Malay, the lingua franca at that time. Among the most progressive periodicals were those published by the Persatoean Arab Indonesia (PAI; the Union of Indonesian Arabs). In particular *Aliran Baroe* was very popular and had a large crowd of readers. Besides peri-

odicals, Hadhrami organizations also published special reports and pamphlets to express concern about undesirable developments in their own circles and to emphazise their position.

In the course of years, I have studied archival documents about the Hadhramis, mostly during repeated visits of a few weeks or months, in several archives in the Netherlands, England, and Indonesia. I went through records of the Nationaal Archief in The Hague and the Collection of Manuscripts of the Koninklijk Instituut voor Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde (KITLV) in Leiden. In England I have studied documents on the Hadhramis in the National Archives in Kew and in the Indian Collection of the British Library in London. In Indonesia I have worked through records about Arabs in the Arsip Nasional in Jakarta. Very interesting information I have found in the personal archive of Abdul Rahman Baswedan, the indisputable leader of the PAI, that was kept in his former house in Taman Yuwono in the center of Yogyakarta. The archive was disorganized and contained many loose documents, besides bound documents or document folders or binders and many newspaper articles. Unfortunately, I did not find all writings by his hand, including several plays of which the titles are known. Also, in the now closed private library of Hamid Algadri in Jakarta, I discovered useful material.

Since the mid-eighties, I have visited several old Arab quarters and new residential areas where many Hadhramis lived on Java and Madura, to talk to inhabitants from all social strata about developments in their circles before, during, and after World War II. The elderly people I have spoken to and who had witnessed the roaring 1930s, still remembered well what happened in those years, but usually were reluctant to speak out about it. They saw it as an internal affair, that should not be raked up again. Nevertheless, the few who were more talkative, confirmed and sometimes exemplified what I had read in documents. In general, the younger generations did not know much about the former troubles.

The differences that once existed between newcomers and established Hadhramis have completely disappeared as almost no immigrants from Hadhramaut have settled in Indonesia since 1942. Relations between the classes have become more friendly, although most members of the upper class, the *sayyid*, continue to pride themselves on their descent and try to abide by traditional prescribed marriage rules. However, one Arab community is not like another. The Arab community in Jakarta is generally more progressive, while the community in Surabaya is more conservative, which in turn is more progressive than communities in places such as Bangil and Bondowoso. In Bondowoso, the *sayyid* and non-*sayyid* live in different quarters; in East-Madura they even live in different towns, Pamekasan and Sumenep, about fifty kilometers apart. The

Hadhramis who live outside the original *kampung Arab* usually are more successful in escaping social control than those who live in the overpopulated old quarters.

To gain additional information, I have also visited offices of Hadhrami organizations such as Rabithah Alawiyah and Al-Irsyad, and interviewed prominent figures of the Hadhrami community, like Hamid Algadri of the PAI, Hussein Badjerei of Al-Irsyad, and, last but not least, Asad Shahab. The latter founded, together with his brother Diaz Shahab, the pro-republican Arabian Press Board (APB) in Jakarta on October 1945 to inform countries in the Middle East about the political negotiations between the Indonesian and Dutch authorities as well as the military confrontations between the Dutch army and the Indonesian troops. Their memories and views were indispensable for a better understanding of the integration and emancipation of the Hadhramis in Indonesia.

3 Outline

Although, with the exception of one chapter, there is a certain time sequence in topics covered in this book, it is not a chronological study of the Hadhrami population during the period in question. Nevertheless, by examining specific issues at depth, the vicissitudes of this population group in a period of about fifty years in which, to say the least, much happened are looked into carefully. Together, the chapters give a picture of the background and the characteristics of the Hadhramis and the challenges they experienced in those years in the context of profound changes that took place in the wider society.

The first chapter of this book deals with the class struggle of the Hadhrami community in the Netherlands East Indies, which amongst others was carried on by means of a figurative 'title fight', following an attempt by descendants of the Prophet to persuade the colonial government to acknowledge their honorific *sayyid* as an aristocratic title. The second chapter is about the sometimes ambiguous immigration procedures with regards to the Hadhramis and the for a long time discriminating and shocking way they were treated after admission.

Both chapters provide the basic information for the three following chapters about the rise of Indo-Hadhrami nationalism in the 1930s. The first one of the three examines the role of the most prominent leader of the PAI, Abdul Rahman Baswedan, to further the integration of the Hadhramis in the Indonesian society at large and to join the Indonesian nationalist movement. An important voice of the nationalistic oriented Hadhramis was the monthly *Aliran Baroe*, on which the attention is focused in the next chapter. It not only encouraged the

awareness among the Hadramis themselves to have become Indonesians, but also worked towards the civilization of the Hadhramis in all fields of society. The last chapter of this triptych explores in detail the text of the play Fatimah written by Hoesin Bafagih, in which a mirror is hold up to the Hadhrami community. The drama gives a fascinating image of the aspirations and frustrations that existed within this minority. Its staging in 1938 caused quite a stir in Hadhrami circles.

The sixth chapter of this book deals with the position of the Hadhramis during the Japanese occupation and the independence struggle against the Dutch. Population groups living in diaspora generally face more complex challenges and choices in times of war than in peaceful periods. The often delicate relationships between indigenous majorities and foreign minorities were again put to the test. In case of the Hadhramis, the outcome resulted eventually in a triumph of the political direction taken in the 1930s.

The seventh chapter analyses the political advice about Hadhrami inhabitants that the Dutch orientalist Snouck Hurgronje provided to the colonial government of the Netherlands East Indies. Before Snouck became a professor in Arabic in Leiden in 1907, he had acted for a long period as an advisor for Islamic Affairs in Batavia. Even after his return to the Netherlands he was not averse to interrupting his scientific pursuits to express his opinion on political matters. He showed himself to be a friend and adversary of the Hadhramis. He opposed the unfair treatment of the Hadhramis by colonial civil servants, but pointed out the danger of sympathy for Pan-Islamism amongst them.

The penultimate chapter presents the implications of World War II and the Indonesian struggle for independence on financial transfers of Indonesian Hadhramis to relatives in Hadhramaut. For the majority of people in Hadhramaut, pre-war remittances were the most important means of support. The Dutch authorities who had returned to Jakarta after the capitulation of Japan had worse things to worry about after the proclamation of the Indonesian Republic and showed little concern for the Hadhramis in the country, let alone those in Hadhramaut.

4 Arabs and Hadhramis

To conclude, I would like to make a remark about the use of the terms Arab and Hadhrami. When I wrote my first articles on immigrants from Hadhramaut in the Netherlands East Indies, I always called them Arabs, as is common in Indonesia to this day in written (government reports, newspapers) and spoken word. Also, in scientific circles worldwide, this designation was prevalent till

the end of the last century. Only the last decades this has changed, in particular after the above-mentioned conference in London. In studies on Arabs in diaspora, it has become important to name the Arabs concerned by their country or region of origin, not only because this is more accurate, but also to allow for comparisons with other population groups of the Arab world. This practice is recently also adopted among academics in Indonesia, as shown by the titles of the international conference in 2017 and the festival in 2018.[3] Among the Arab population in Indonesia itself the use of the term Hadhrami is still rare. Only prominent and highly educated members utilize it in certain contexts. For the majority of the Indonesian population the word Hadhrami has little or no meaning at all. In line with this development, I have used the term Arabs in my earlier writings in this book and Hadhramis in the later ones. I consider it inappropriate to change the former denomination retroactive.

3 The International Conference on The Dynamics of Hadhramis in Indonesia. Jakarta, 22–23 November 2017; Festival Hadhrami. Merayakan Keragaman Etnis Keturunan Hadhramaut di Indonesia. Jakarta, 25–26 April 2018.

CHAPTER 1

Discord and Solidarity among the Arabs in the Netherlands East Indies, 1900–1942

Arabs are the second most important minority of foreign origin in present-day Indonesia.* Like the more numerous Chinese, they play an important role in the economic life of the country, as entrepreneurs, traders, shopkeepers, or money-lenders and, like the Chinese, they, too, are a clearly differentiable ethnic group. Prejudices that exist toward the Arabs correspond, to a certain degree, with those toward the Chinese. Both groups, for instance, are accused of engaging in dishonest competition, usurious practices, forming protective trade associations, bribery, and giving preference to members of their own group. Yet open hostility is seldom if ever displayed toward Arabs. The reason for this lack of animosity can be found in the smallness of the Arab community and in their national and religious identity. Numbering no more than a fraction of the Chinese population in Indonesia,[1] Arabs today feel themselves to be Indonesians, in spite of all the social and cultural differences. In contrast to the Chinese, nearly all Arabs became Indonesian citizens when Indonesia gained its independence, and are generally accepted in their social environment as fellow countrymen or compatriots. This acceptance stems in part from the Arabs' religion, Islam, which is the same as that of the larger part of the Indonesian population (Coppel 1979, 8–15). In religious matters Arabs generally enjoy much esteem. They come from the Arabian peninsula, the cradle of Islam, and had an important part in the spread and refinement of Islam in Indonesia. Their religious status neutralizes to some extent their economically unequal position. Their acceptance is also apparent from the many positions they hold in political and administrative areas. In 1992 there were three cabinet members of Arab origin and not a single one of Chinese descent.

The basis for Arab identification with Indonesia was laid in the early decades of this century, or more precisely between 1912 and 1934. In that period extensive disputes and dissension occurred among the Arabs of the archipelago. Under the influence of nationalist emancipation movements at home and

* This article was originally published in *Indonesia* 1993, no. 55: 73–90.

1 In the late 1980s, Arab leaders on Java with whom I spoke estimated that there were about 450,000 persons of Arab descent in Indonesia.

abroad, a kind of social revolution took place within their relatively closed community. Arabs of lower rank no longer accepted the position of the traditional upper stratum and succeeded in overthrowing the strong hierarchical societal order which orginated in Southern Arabia. The tensions within the community not only led to new social identities, but also facilitated the transition from a primarily Arab to a primarily Indonesian identity.

In this article I want to expound the shifts in social identity and concomitant changes in national identity among the Arabs in Indonesia. I will do that by analyzing a conflict that arose at the end of the 1920s over the use of the title *sayyid*, a title traditionally borne by members of the upper stratum, a kind of "spiritual aristocracy." At that time, Arabs of the lower strata no longer tolerated the traditional elite's exclusive right to use this title, denying that it denoted a special status. They, therefore, started to use the title themselves. The fight over the use of the term *sayyid* to a high degree symbolizes the social tensions in the Arab community between those struggling for emancipation and those vigorously trying to maintain the existing social order. For a better understanding of the internal discord, I will first detail the historical background and the social characteristics of the Arab population in Indonesia.

1 The Arab Minority in the Netherlands East Indies

The first indications of Arabs visiting maritime Southeast Asia date from the tenth century. In the following centuries their number must have gradually increased. In any event, Arabs traded and contributed directly to the spread of Islam (Ricklefs 1979, 104–105), and in the fifteenth century small Arab communities could be found in most of the important coastal places of the Indonesian archipelago (Van der Kroef 1954, I: 252; Van Leur 1967, 139). Some Arabs succeeded in acquiring a great deal of influence in these areas, and various Islamic trading states, that arose on the north coast of Java in the sixteenth century, were ruled by persons of Arab origin (De Graaf and Pigeaud 1974). At the end of the eighteenth century Arab fortune hunters founded their own states in Sumatra and Kalimantan (Van der Kroef 1954, I: 253).

Many of these immigrants probably blended into the local population or migrated elsewhere. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, no more than 621 Arabs and Moors lived on Java, as traders and religious leaders (Raffles 1817, I: 63, 75). Throughout the century the number of Arabs again rose, especially after the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869. Each year thousands of Arabs migrated eastwards. Between 1870 and 1900 the Arab minority in the Netherlands East Indies increased from about 13,000 to 27,000 (Van der Kroef 1954,

1: 250). In 1920 the Arab community listed 45,000 members, and by 1930 their number had risen to 71,335 (Ibid.; *Volkstelling 1930*, 1935). Although reliable figures are not available for later years, continuous immigration must have resulted in there being close to 80,000 Arabs in the colony on the eve of the Japanese occupation.[2]

The great majority of the Arabs originated in Hadhramaut, a region in South Yemen, which in 1990 merged with North Yemen to become the Republic of Yemen. The others came primarily from the Hijaz, the region in which Mecca and Medina are located. While the Hadhramis came to trade, Arabs from the Hijaz traveled back and forth to the Indonesian archipelago in order to recruit and accompany hajjis. In the beginning, most of the immigrants, who were almost all men, were not planning to settle in the archipelago. They wanted to earn money quickly in order to aid their poor relatives, or to save money in order to assure themselves a better future. Great sums of money were sent home each year (Bujra 1967, 355–375). Although many migrants returned home, most remained in the archipelago. A large part of these young immigrants married in their new environment, inhibiting their return. At the beginning of the nineteenth century most of them married local women; but later they married primarily descendants of these mixed marriages, *muwallad* or *peranakan* Arabs.[3] Many immigrants preferred an assured existence in the Indies to an uncertain future in Hadhramaut. The good sea connections with Southern Arabia prior to World War II made it always possible to return to their land of origin for a longer or shorter period. Some even had a second home or a second wife there. At that time, it was not unusual for children to be sent to Hadhramaut for a number of years to obtain a good religious education (Van der Meulen and Von Wissmann 1932, 33, 89, 96; Van der Meulen 1951, 145).

The Hadhramaut is an infertile, mountainous region. Until far into the nineteenth century it was remote. At the beginning of last century a journey by foot from the most important port cities of Al Mukalla and Ash Shihr to the relatively densely populated wadi in the hinterland took five to eight days (Van den Berg 1886, 17–32; Van der Meulen and Von Wissmann 1932, passim). Tribal wars, family feuds, banditry, and robbery long made the region unsafe. The majority of the population survived from irrigated agriculture, possible only

2 According to Van der Kroef (1954, 1: 250, 273) Indonesia had 85,000 Arab inhabitants in 1952. He got this estimate from the Interior Ministry of the Indonesian Republic. The figure, probably "inherited" from the colonial administration, is far from reliable. Due to World War II and the struggle for independence, the registration cannot have been complete.

3 *Muwallad* is the Arabic term for people of Indo-Arab descent, *peranakan* the Indonesian term for persons of mixed descent.

in the riverbeds when enough rain fell. In order to stay alive a considerable portion of the male population was forced to seek work elsewhere. During the nineteenth century they went to India, East Africa, and the countries around the Red Sea, but after the turn of the century, the Netherlands East Indies and the British Straits Settlements became the most important destinations. In 1934 about a quarter of the Hadhramis lived outside the Hadhramaut, with their largest colony located in the Netherlands East Indies (Bujra 1967, 367).[4]

The importance of the Netherlands East Indies to the Hadhramis in that period is evident from the reports of the first Europeans who traveled through the heart of the Hadhramaut (Ingrams 1942; Stark 1941; Van der Meulen and Von Wissmann 1932; Van der Meulen 1951). Everywhere they met inhabitants who had lived for some time on Java and spoke Malay, or who had family there. Many people regularly received money from Java. In this generally impoverished region, there were people living in stately homes or palaces, paid for with the earnings of migration labour. Some households had a Javanese or Chinese housekeeper or cook (Van der Meulen and Von Wissmann 1932, 96, 121).

Until the founding of the state of South Yemen in 1967, Hadhramaut was not united politically. For centuries it had been the scene of rival kingdoms, autonomous cities, and tribes. Although the Ottoman sultans counted Hadhramaut as part of the caliphate, they never exercised any real authority there. According to Snouck Hurgronje—the famous Dutch Islam scholar who also advised the Dutch colonial governement on Arab affairs—a Turkish governor would only be able to maintain himself in this hotbed of factionalism through continual displays of power (Gobée and Adriaanse 1957–1959, II: 1731), and there were incessant rebellions against Turkish rule. In the nineteenth century British influence increased in South Arabia. They occupied Aden in 1839, and during the last quarter of the century made treaties with kings and tribal leaders. After a diplomatic treaty with Turkey in 1904, the British gained possession of the area now called South Yemen. Initially they paid little attention to the hinterland. Only in the 1930s, when tribal wars and bloody feuds threatened to render the situation untenable, was a start made with the pacification of the Hadhramaut (Moss 1988, 79–91). The most important vassals of the British in this endeavor were the heads of the al-Qua'ity and al-Kathiri families who each had a large sphere of influence in the Hadhramaut and who ironically had until then fought each other (Gobée and Adriaanse 1957–1965, II: 1529).

4 For more about the Hadhramis who migrated to the Indian coast see Kostiner 1984, II: 206–237.

Hadhrami society is marked by a fairly rigid, descent-based class structure (Cf. Van den Berg 1886, 32–48; Bujra 1971, 13–53). The highest class are the *sayyid* who claim to be descended from the prophet Muhammad via his grandson Husein.[5] They are also called Ba-ʿAlawi or Alawi after Alawi, a grandson of their clan ancestor Ahmad bin ʿIsa ("the Emigrant"), who more than a thousand years ago moved to Hadhramaut from Basrah in Iraq. The *sayyid* are the religious nobility of the Hadramaut. They occupy a privileged position, are always unarmed, and fulfill important religious and social tasks such as supervising the observance of religious duties, leading religious activities and ceremonies, and caring for Islamic education. Before the founding of the People's Republic of South Yemen, they acted as mediators and peacemakers between the warring parties and provided safe conduct through enemy territory. The people kiss the hand of *sayyid* in greeting and make pilgrimages to the graves of holy *sayyid*. Owing to the centuries-long isolation in the Hadhramaut, the *sayyid* see themselves as a purer noble lineage than the descendants of the Prophet in other countries (Gobée and Adriaanse 1957–1965, II: 1597). Besides fulfilling spiritual, educational, and political functions, the *sayyid* also engage in economic activities. They own land and trade.

Below the *sayyid* are two groups who form the middle layer of the society: the *syekh* and the *qabili*.[6] Both groups claim to be descended from Qahtan, the ancestor of all southern Arabs. The *syekh* enjoy the higher status. They are an indigenous religious elite, descendants of theologians and wise men who fulfill the same tasks as the *sayyid*. Fewer in number than the *sayyid*, however, the group is eclipsed by the descendants of the Prophet. Just like the *sayyid*, the *syekh* can devote themselves either partially or completely to worldly affairs. Members of the tribes are known as *qabili*. Each tribe has its own territory which, at least until the pacification of the Hadhramaut, was defended with might and main. Members of the tribes formed their armed forces. In spite of their lower status, the *qabili* were in fact the real rulers of the Hadhramaut. The al-Kathiri and the al-Qua'ity belong to this group.

At the bottom of the social scale are the *masakin* (lit. the poor) or *daif* (lit. weak)–those who are of unimportant origin. The group consists of traders, tradesmen, labourers and servants, and previously also slaves.

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5 *Sayyid* is really the singular form of *sadah*. In Indonesian, however, there is no difference in spelling between the singular and the plural. The inhabitants of Arab descent have taken over this custom.

6 The Arabic word for *syekh* is *shaykh* (plural: *mashayikh*). The word *qabili* means a member of a tribe. The Arabic plural is *qabail*.

Until the 1970s, as far as is known, the boundaries between these three classes were strictly maintained in the Hadhramaut and are expressed among other things in the marriage regulations (Bujra 1971, passim). All three classes emphasize the principle of *kafaah* (equality of rank) between marriage partners (Juynboll 1930, 186–187), meaning that women never marry "beneath their social status." The *sayyid* go so far as to disapprove of their daughters marrying with *syarif*, descendants of Hasan, another grandson of the Prophet (Gobée and Adriaanse 1957–1965, II: 1579). Men, however, may marry women of a lower status because descent is reckoned along the male line.

Bujra (1971, 79) suspects that the majority of the migrants to Southeast Asia were *sayyid*. Most were able to raise the money for the journey and to bring along a small amount of capital for trade. Batavia in the 1930s counted 700 members of the well-known al-Attas family—*sayyid* from the town of Huraydha (Van der Meulen 1951, 168). Thousands from the other layers of society, however, must also have migrated eastwards. The *masakin* were undoubtedly the second largest group. They generally had no choice about migrating, for the continual poverty in which they found themselves in Hadhramaut drove them away. Some left on their own with borrowed money or with an advance from an Arab sponsor in the Indies; others came in the service of a *sayyid* or a *syekh*. *Syekh* and *qabili* migrated in fewer numbers, although they were present in almost every important Arab community on Java.

In the Netherlands East Indies, the Arabs were officially counted as *vreemde oosterlingen*, Foreign Orientals, just like the Chinese and other foreigners from Asia (with the exception of the Japanese). As a result, they had different rights and duties from other categories of inhabitants such as Europeans and the indigenous population. Thus, until 1919 Arabs admitted to the Indies had their freedom of movement severely limited by a system of required residence in specified neighbourhoods and travel passes.[7] Before that year, they were only allowed to live in certain quarters of designated towns. These neighbourhoods were administered by the colonial regime with the aid of Arab quarter heads who had the rank of lieutenant (*letnan*) or captain (*kapten*), depending on the size of their community. At the beginning of this century, these *kampung Arab* were already overpopulated. If an Arab wished to leave his place of residence in order to trade or visit a family member, he was required to apply for a travel pass. Aside from curtailing their freedom of movement, other, separate legal rules also limited the economic freedom of Foreign Orientals.

7 See Snouck Hurgronje on this in Gobée and Adriaanse 1957–1965, II: 1580–1582.

In the greater part of Java, for example, they were forbidden from owning land other than house allotments.

In spite of these hindrances, the Arabs succeeded in gaining an important position in the fields of both the economy and religion. In Batavia, Surabaya, and Semarang, as well as in smaller places like Cirebon, Gresik, Tegal, Pekalongan, Bangil, Bondowoso, and Sumenep, the Arab quarters grew into busy trade districts.[8] Along with the Chinese, they controlled the intermediary trade, although each group concentrated on certain products. Among the Arabs these included clothing, construction materials, furniture, gems, perfumes, and religious literature. In several cities, they founded workshops where batik was printed and textiles were woven. Quite a number of Arabs functioned as money-lenders, with their reputations on the whole worse than those of their Chinese counterparts. The thriving usury cast a slur on the Arab community. If colonial administration reports are to be believed, in some areas the word Arab was synonymous with such terms as miser and swindler (Oetarjo 1925, 139–146; Heijer 1925,147–149). Among the *sayyid* there were many who acted as religious leaders and preachers, who in some regions had large followings among the local population. As descendants of the Prophet they were celebrated, and, just as in Hadhramaut, graves of outstanding *sayyid* became pilgrimage sites which were exploited by their descendants, whom Snouck Hurgronje once called "gravestone parasites" (Gobée and Adriaanse 1957–1965, II: 1566).

Initially, the Arab community was a rather closed one. Although the immigrants married local women, these were forced to behave like women in Hadhramaut. The number of marriages with indigenous women declined as more *peranakan* Arabs or *muwallad* were born. Arranged marriages between Arabs who lived in widely separated places, even between Hadhramaut and the Indies, were far from unusual and were arranged precisely to strengthen Arab community identity. Children were brought up as much as possible in the Hadhrami way, and interaction between the sexes and between members of different social groups did not differ from those on the other side of the Indian Ocean. Internal social relationships reflected those in the homeland, at least until the second decade of the twentieth century.

8 Only a few of these communities have been studied. On the Arab community in Surabaya see Patji 1983, 47–81. On the Arabs in Pekalongan see Thalib 1976; Vuldy 1985, 95–119; Vuldy 1987.

1 Identification with the Arab World

Until long after the turn of the century, the majority of Arabs in the Netherlands East Indies identified with their country of origin. This situation resulted in the first place from the continual stream of *wulaiti*, newcomers or *totok* Arabs, coming to the Indies, the close connections that existed between migrants and those who stayed behind, and the "temporary" nature of the migration.[9] Other factors also strengthened Arab identity, however, such as the continual discrimination by the colonial authorities against Arabs, political developments in the Arabian peninsula, and Pan-Islamism.

The status of Foreign Oriental was a thorn in the flesh of the Arab community. It not only impeded the further development of trade, but also injured their self-respect; they felt demoted to the status of second-class citizens. There were continual protests, especially by the *sayyid*, against the settlement policies, the time-consuming process for issuing passes, and the inspection of papers on the road, which was felt to be degrading. Through appeals first to the Turkish government and later to the British, they attempted to change the mind of the colonial government and gain the status of Europeans.[10]

Snouck Hurgronje supported their objections to the limitations on travel. Time and again he complained in his recommendations to the Governor-General about the "unpleasant" and "illegal" way the colonial authorities treated this section of the population. Civil authorities often seemed to exceed their authority in executing these regulations. The colony clearly did not lack "*Araber-fresser*" (Gobée and Adriaanse 1957–1965, II: 1566). Nonetheless, Snouck himself also recommended for a long time that the immigration of Arabs to the Dutch East Indies should be curtailed or ended. This friend of many prominent Arabs thought that:

> the greater part of the people [...] traveling this way consists of poor Hadhramis who grew up in an environment in which misery and ignorance as well as delusion and fanaticism rule. They contribute little or nothing to the flourishing of trade and industry, and their moral influence on the indigenous population is mostly harmful, although favourable exceptions can be noted.
>
> GOBÉE and ADRIAANSE 1957–1965, II: 1533

9 The terms *wulaiti* (Arabic) and *totok Arab* in Indonesian both refer to full-blooded Arabs.

10 Nationaal Archief, The Hague (henceforth NA), *Verbaal* (Minute, henceforth Vb.) 10 February 1921/X1, "De Arabische kwestie in Nederlandsch-Indië."

Snouck feared the political and religious influence of the Arabs: the spread of Islam and Pan-Islamism.

For a long time the authorities ignored Snouck's advice. It is true that they were apprehensive of the ever-increasing stream of Arab immigrants, but for different reasons. Within the colonial administration more and more voices were raised to counter the pernicious influence of the Arabs on the economy. Lending money at extortionate rates of interest, renting houses for usurious fees, selling goods at unfavourable credit conditions, fictitious bankruptcies, and other dubious practices were thought to injure financially the local population.[11] Although nothing showed that these kinds of practices were more prevalent among the Arabs than among other ethnic groups, an attempt was made in the second decade of last century to limit Arab immigration. Starting in 1915, people who were expected to have a deleterious influence on the economy were admitted only under certain conditions or were refused admittance to the country. This led to a storm of protest within the Arab community, and as early as 1919 the government was forced to withdraw the ruling.[12]

The policies of the Netherlands East Indies administration, however negative in themselves, had a great influence on maintaining Arab self-awareness. This consciousness was further strengthened by the international attention paid to their problems. Representatives of the Arab minority had brought the discriminatory treatment by the Dutch to the attention of the Turkish sultan as early as the end of the nineteenth century. They assumed a right to his intervention because he claimed nominal authority in the Hadhramaut. Some Arabs even presumed that, on this basis, they had the right to Turkish nationality. Turkey was flattered, but could do little in view of its weak international position. However, it did use the Arabs' complaints for its own purposes: Turkey hoped to improve its involvement with the Arab world by expressing its concern about the situation. By making empty promises, the Turkish consuls in Batavia stirred

11 For stereotyped examples of these practices see a.o. Dalman 1931, 68–73; Noordink 1925, 164–165; Sinambela 1933, 846–850. Dalman (p. 68) finds the Arab money-lenders more dangerous than the Chinese "because they are slyer and more cautious." Sinambela (p. 850) describes the way the Arab money-lenders go to work: "When he sees that a person has enough fields or a good house, he approaches him and asks if he has plans to borrow. He courts the prospective debtor, especially his children and he buys biscuits for them or gives them 10 to 30 cents. He talks about the religion, his and that of his potential borrower, and makes him believe that failing to make payments will not be considered a serious offence. If one considers the character of the natives in general, one knows that they cannot resist."

12 NA, Vb. 10 February 1921/X1.

up the disquiet in the Arab community. Anti-Dutch articles in the Turkish and Egyptian press also contributed to this restlessness (Gobée and Adriaanse 1957–1965, II: 1717–1752).

After the Hadhramaut came under British influence, the Arabs turned to London. The British considered all Hadhramis as "protected British subjects," and so migrants from this region were to experience no form of hindrance in the Straits Settlements.[13] Although the Dutch government did not share the British opinion about the nationality of the Hadhramis, the British attitude contributed in large part to the discontinuance of the ban on Arab immigrants in 1919. In the same year the pass and quarter systems were terminated.[14]

More important to the sense of Arab unity among the Hadhramis was Arab nationalism and the resurgent Pan-Islamism of this period. The Turkish empire declined and finally fell apart after World War I. With aid or opposition from competing world powers, attempts were made to create new Arab and Islamic states everywhere in the Middle East. Arab nationalism received a tremendous response among the Arab minority in the Netherlands East Indies. This Arab awakening was closely connected with the modern Pan-Islamism, that is to say with the idea that Islamic peoples had to unite in order to promote their interests. Some followers of Pan-Islam advocated a powerful political union of the Arab world. The fall of the sultan of Turkey, who as caliph exercised temporal power over the Muslim world, led to all kinds of speculations about a new center for the caliphate. Most Pan-Islamists saw the religious tie as a means of raising the consciousness and political independence of the Islamic peoples. The feeling of being a part of a unity that would champion the interests of its members supported the Hadhramis in their quest for just treatment in the Dutch East Indies (Gobée and Adriaanse 1957–1965, II: 1709).

2 Discord between *Sayyid* and *Syekh*

Although Pan-Islamism and Arab nationalism stirred up the Arab minority in the Dutch East Indies far into the 1930s, these were eclipsed by another development between 1912 and about 1934: the conflict between *sayyid* and *syekh*. In 1901 Arabs founded in Batavia the Jamiat Kheir, the Association for the Good. This association was to maintain Arab culture and the Arab language by opening its own schools and by sending youths to Islamic countries

13 NA, Vb. 10 February 1921/X1 of Ibid.

14 NA, Vb. 10 February 1921/X1 of Ibid.

for their continuing education (See pamphlet *Menjelang* 1981, 18). In 1912 three Arab teachers were recruited, one from the Sudan, one from Morocco, and one from the Hijaz. The Sudanese Ahmad Soerkati, who had long studied in Mecca, became an important religious leader. Within a few years he started a reformist movement that caused discord in the Arab community (Noer 1973, 58–63; Pijper 1977, 110).

From the beginning, Soerkati was offended by the traditional religious views and rigid social relations within the Hadhrami immigrant community. He especially disagreed with the haughty way in which the aristocratic *sayyid* behaved in Java. He was a follower of Muhammad Abduh and Rasyid Ridha, two modernist Egyptians who wanted to bring the Islamic experience into line with the demands of the time and who preached the equality of all believers.[15] Soerkati's views soon led to heated discussions in the Arab community.[16]

The immediate cause of division within the community were his pronouncements about marriage and the kissing of the hand. During a visit to the head of the Arab community in Solo, he unequivocally let it be known that a marriage between a daughter of a *sayyid* and a non-*sayyid* is allowed, and is even in accordance with the *kafaah*. On another occasion he attacked the self-exaltation and delusion of sacredness of the *sayyid* and argued for the abolition of the hand kiss (Schrieke 1921, 190–191). Both events had a tremendous impact among the Arabs. The *sayyid* were deeply insulted and felt themselves threatened. The non-*sayyid* who agreed with Soerkati seized on the pronouncements in order to extricate themselves from *sayyid* influence. Soerkati was forced to leave the Jamiat Kheir, and in 1915 he founded the Jamiyah al-Islah-wal-Irsyad, the Association for Reform and Guidance, abbreviated to Al-Irsyad (Pijper 1977, 109, 113). This association became the bastion of the anti-*sayyid* or the *syekh*, which became the general term for all non-*sayyid*. Its history embodies, to a large extent, the emancipation of the lower classes in the Arab community.

The Irsyad, which, like the Jamiat Kheir, soon had local branches and schools throughout the country, aimed to purify Islam of superstitions and additions. Besides, it wanted to denigrate the Hadhrami class structure. It was not descent but the equality of people (*sama rasa sama rata*) that was central for the Irsyadis. Through modern education, moreover, they wanted to promote Arab self-expression and social mobility in Java and elsewhere in the colony (Cf. *Menjelang* 1981; Schrieke 1921).

15 NA, Mailrapport (henceforth MR) 1042 geheim (secret) 1929, letter 4 April 1928.

16 NA, MR 685 geheim 1931 and MR 792 geheim 1931.

This difference of opinion led to a long period of animosity between the two parties. Years of relative quiet alternated with years of open enmity in which *sayyid* and *syekh* opposed each other in word and deed. In local Arab papers, pamphlets, brochures, and edifying texts, positions were defended and attacked.[17] Sometimes the polemics grew into real abuse. The *sayyid* accused the *syekh* among other things of communism, slander, and heresy, while Soerkati was called a "negro" and "a seed of discord" (Schrieke 1921, 193, 199, 209). The *syekh* in turn reproached the *sayyid* for their "pride, haughtiness and notoriously sinful behaviour" (Schrieke 1921, 217). In some places the differences of opinion were fought out by newly formed local associations, which walked in step with either the Irsyad or with the recently founded Rabithah Alawiyah, the union of descendants of the Prophet. Now and then riots broke out. Opponents were denied admittance to the mosque, were pelted with stones, or fought out their differences in the street. In Pekalongan a school building was set on fire (*Gerakan Al-Irsjad* 1934, 98).

However, not everyone was happy with these periodic eruptions, which fouled the Arabs' own nest and in some sense isolated them from the rest of society. Between 1915 and 1930 several attempts were made to bring about a reconciliation between the parties, each time without success. An attempt in 1928 by a highly respected, very rich Hadhrami of the al-Qaf family from Singapore failed, while the good offices of al-Amoedi, an Arab from Ambon, in 1929 also came to naught.[18] Al-Amoedi attempted to start a dialogue by bringing friendly and opposing associations together in a federation, the Wahdah al'Arabijah (Arab Unity). He also started a special association for Arabs born in the Dutch East Indies, the Indo-Arabisch Verbond (IAV, Indo-Arab Union). The mistrust between the participating associations was so great, however, that after a short period both organizations became dormant (Van der Plas 1931, 178).

3 The Title Fight

Tensions reached a high point in May 1931 when, during an Irsyad congress in Batavia, the decision was made no longer to consider the title *sayyid* as a prerogative of the Ba-ʿAlawi. *Sayyid* was not a noble title, the congress decided, but just meant "mister," "sir," "tuan," or "monsieur." It was recognized that in some

17 For details see Schrieke 1921. Schrieke deals in particular with the articles which appeared in *Al-Iqbal*, but constantly refers to other newspapers and periodicals.

18 NA, MR 1064 geheim 1929 and MR 233 geheim 1939.

Arab regions it was also used to refer to a respectable or generous person or as term of address or synonym for husband, master, leader, or prince, but, at the same time, it was emphasized that it was never reserved for a certain group. Therefore, each Arab had the right to add the predicate to his name, as was usual in a number of Arab countries. The decision struck at the *raison d'être* of the *sayyid*. It meant that they could no longer differentiate themselves from the rest of the population as descendants of the Prophet, and that they would lose the privileges attached to that position. In short, they feared the end of their aristocratic privileges.[19]

After the congress, the whole Arab community was in great uproar. The *syekh* provoked the Alawi by registering members of their group who married as *sayyid*, adding the term to the nameplates on their houses, and introducing themselves to outsiders as *sayyid*.[20] On June 10, several weeks after the congress, the Rabithah Alawiyah petitioned the Governor-General for legal protection of the title of *sayyid*.[21] In support of the request, the association pointed to the separate regulations in such areas as marriage and inheritance law that were in force for the descendants of the Prophet among the Shafi'i school, which is followed by nearly all Muslims in Indonesia. It also emphasized that for several centuries the Arab minority in the Netherlands East Indies had been divided into *sayyid* and non-*sayyid* and that this differentiation had always been officially recognized in passports, contracts, and notarial acts. In contrast with the Irsyadis, the Alawi were, moreover, of the opinion that in the Muslim world the title *sayyid* was generally reserved for the descendants of Husein. Based on historical, juridical, and linguistic grounds, the association thought that only the Alawi had rights to the title.[22] It feared that when every Hadhrami could call himself *sayyid*, "undesirable events" would occur in the areas of religion and commerce, not to speak of what would happen to "social life in the Dutch East Indies in general."

During the following months detailed expositions on the meaning of the term *sayyid* appeared in *Hadramauth*, the conservative organ of the Alawi, and in *Al-Dahna*, the progressive paper of the *syekh*.[23] Also for the first time the non-Arab press began to interest itself in the "title fight." The Malay Chinese

19 NA, MR 1265 geheim 1932, letter 20 June 1931.

20 On the alleged misuse of the title *sayyid* see NA, MR 1265 geheim 1932, a.o. letters 12, 15, 19 February 1932 and 9, 10 September 1932.

21 NA, MR 1265 geheim 1932, letter 20 June 1931.

22 In this connection the authors also refer to Snouck Hurgronje 1888, I: 56 ff. and 1893, I: 158, 160.

23 NA, MR 1265 geheim 1932, "Overzicht van de Arabische pers."

papers *Keng Po*, *Siang Po*, and *Sin Tit Po* let *sayyid* and *syekh* carry on a discussion in their columns (*Gerakan Al-Irsjad* 1934). The parties juggled with words. Hair splitting, delusions, and red herrings blurred the real concern of the argument: the emancipation of the non-Alawi.[24]

In order to curb the animosity that was palpable in every Arab quarter, discussions were held at the end of the year between representatives of the Alawi and the Irsyadis. At the conclusion "peace terms" were signed and a supervisory committee was formed. The negotiators called for a "spirit of brotherhood and equality of rights" with regard to religious and social relationships, but at the same time announced that they had not reached an agreement about religious differences. For this reason they requested that mutual opinions be respected, as long as these were not in conflict with the four *mazhab*, the four Islamic schools. The parties agreed that the "sad past of discord and dissension" had to be buried. Referring to Allah's words "the faithful are brothers," they were asked to stop despising each other in word and deed. The article dealing with this said:

> One should not ridicule another, nor give another insulting names, nor insult [each] other's ancestry while both parties must forbid the uneducated among themselves from doing such things [...]. During meetings and in schools moreover everything that is not in accordance with Islamic law or gives offense and can cause discord must be avoided for the Words of God: 'Do not slander each other and do not give each other insulting nick names.'[25]

How divided the community was, appears also from the call to reinstate traditional customs, such as greeting each other, making sick calls, and participating in funeral processions without discrimination.

The *sayyid* viewed the peace accords as a defeat and did not accept them. They felt that Soerkati, who represented the Irsyadis, had outwitted the negotiators of the Ba-'Alawi. In November 1931 a letter from the Rabithah Alawiyah was once again sent to the government, this time to point out that article 507 of the Criminal Code stated that the unlawful use of a Dutch or indigenous title was punishable. They thought that the title *sayyid* and *sayyidah* (only sporadically was the female title mentioned) should also fall under this formulation.

24 The most important articles from *Keng Po*, *Siang Po*, and *Tit Sin Po* are collected in *Gerakan Al-Irsjad* 1934.

25 NA, MR 1265 geheim 1932, Appendix A.

The association also pointed to article 156 of the same law code which said that it was against the law to express "feelings of animosity, hate, or contempt" against one or more population groups in the Netherlands East Indies, where group signified "each part of the population [...] that differentiates itself from one or more parts of that population by race, ethnicity, religion, origin, descent, nationality or constitutional position."[26] The Alawi thought they had found a new argument for protecting their title and position in the legal criteria of descent.

In the first half of 1932, serious riots took place once again in the Arab quarters. In some cities they resulted in bloodshed (*Indisch Verslag 1932* 1933, I: 15). In the mosque of the Arab community in Bondowoso (East Java), several Irsyadis who pushed forward during a service were attacked by *sayyid*.[27]

Meanwhile the top leadership of the Al-Irsyad wrote the Governor-General registering their objection to the Ba-'Alawi's petition and requesting that the government not take sides in the conflict.[28] They contested the superior position of the *sayyid*, pointing out in this regard that a comparable difference of opinion had occurred in the first centuries after the rise of Islam. This dispute had resulted in the separation of the Shi'ites who wanted to maintain the privileged position of the descendants of the Prophet. According to the writers of the letter, the privileges of the *sayyid* have always been disputed among the Sunnis. They viewed the high position of the *sayyid* particularly in the Hadhramaut as resulting from the fact that, until its conquest by Ibn Saud, Mecca had been ruled by *syarif*, descendants of Husein's brother Hasan. The *sayyid*'s claims to high status were said to have been strengthened in the Netherlands East Indies because the local population venerated the *sayyid* as saints and because the government regularly consulted "prominent and indisputably able members of that group in political matters."[29]

Halfway throught the year, the Rabithah again approached the government which had still taken no action. The Rabithah pointed to the existence under the earlier caliphs of a separate department to control the purity of the *sayyid* and *syarif* lines and to promote their interests. In those days the appropriation of the title had been punishable. Under the Turkish caliphs, all kinds of decrees confirmed the distinguished position of the Hadhrami *sayyid*. There existed, on paper in each case, a separate *forum privilegatum* for this group. Aside from

26 NA, MR 1265 geheim 1932, Appendix B, letter 24 November 1931.

27 In 1987 I spent some time in this place and found that the incident, in which one Irsyadi was killed, still divided the local Arab community into two camps.

28 NA, MR 1265 geheim 1932, letter 12 February 1932.

29 Ibid.

these arguments, they cited Arab works that confirmed the aristocratic position of the *sayyid*.[30]

Although the conflict was ignored by the majority of the population of the Netherlands East Indies and was insignificant in comparison with other problems that occurred in those years, it nevertheless contained national and international dimensions. The social and religious ideas of the Al-Irsyad did not differ much from those of the Muhammadiyah, the most important indigenous Islamic reform movement. According to Pijper, Soerkati's work was an important source of inspiration for this organization in its early years.[31] It is, therefore, not surprising that the Muhammadiyah supported the goals of the progressive Arabs, as did the Partai Sarekat Islam Indonesia. Both Tjokroaminoto and Haji Agus Salim, together the most important leaders of this party, more than once voiced pro-Irsyad opinions. The *sayyid* were supported in particular by the Nahdlatul Ulama, a party in which traditionally oriented rural *kiayi*, religious leaders, played an important role. Like the *sayyid*, the religious leaders felt themselves threatened by the desire for religious renewal and social change.

The internal divisions in the Arab community in the Netherlands East Indies had also not escaped attention from the inhabitants of Hadhramaut and Hadhrami colonies in other countries: the conflict led to sharp altercations between the traditional classes there (Bujra 1967; Kostiner 1984). For this reason, the English initially (until 1920) refused to give passports to Irsyadis who wanted to travel to the Hadhramaut or the Straits Settlements.[32] Both the *sayyid* and *syekh* sought the support of like-minded Hadhramis abroad. The *sayyid* knew, in any case, that the al-Qua'ity sultan was on their side. In a letter to the government, the sultan had called those who used the *sayyid* title illegally criminals and propagandists for socialism and bolshevism.[33] The *syekh* were assured of the support of the modernist movements in the Middle East. Their ideas were repeatedly defended in the international Arab press.[34]

The title fight not only undermined the social cohesion of the Arab community; it also had severe consequences in the economic field. Employees from opposing sides were dismissed and debts to adversaries were no longer paid off. Arab business declined and traders lost part of their clientele. Some entrepreneurs invested so much money in the conflict that they teetered on the edge of bankruptcy. According to *Hadramauth*, the official journal of the Alawi,

30 NA, MR 1265 geheim 1932, letter 9 May 1932.

31 NA, MR 1265 geheim 1932, letter 20 June 1932.

32 About this case see NA, Vb. 10 February 1921/X1.

33 NA, MR 1265 geheim 1932, "Overzicht van de Arabische pers."

34 Ibid.

the Arabs were "financially and morally so weakened that their future was threatened" (*Hadramauth* 11 August 1932). The dissension also did not improve the negative image that outsiders had for many years of Arab businessmen.[35]

In February 1933 the government answered the petitions from both parties.[36] It had decided not to intervene, but left the *sayyid* free to put "al-'Alawi" after their names in official documents, in distinction to the *syekh*. In this the government followed the advice of its Office for Native Affairs, but deviated from the position of its most important adviser Snouck Hurgronje, who agreed with the *sayyid*'s demands.[37] He, in fact, proposed changing the criminal code in such a way that "current Arab titles in the East Indies" became legally recognized.

The *sayyid* were disappointed. The proposal to add the words "al'-Alawi" to their name was indignantly rejected. The government's decision not to intervene implied that henceforth each Arab in the Dutch East Indies could use the title *sayyid*. What was meant as a neutral stand, resulted in a serious loss of face for the descendants of Muhammad. By submitting new letters endorsing their view, including one from the senate of the Al-Azhar University in Cairo ("the greatest and most important body of scholars in the Islamic world"), the *sayyid* still tried to turn the tide. Violent reactions, such as those in the preceding period, however, did not occur. The *sayyid* began to realize that social relations within the Arab community and within the world at large had irreversibly changed. During the years of commotion new boundaries had gradually come into being, such as between the *totok* Arabs and the *peranakan* Arabs, between progressive and conservative *sayyid*, and between the youth and the elders. It was the young peranakan Arabs who were able in the late 1930s to push the internal division further into the background.

4 Integration in the Wider Society

Early in 1934 a congress was organized in Pekalongan by the *sayyid* allied to the Rabithah Alawiyah in order to discuss the government's negative decision regarding the title question and to prepare new protests. During the congress,

35 NA, MR 511 geheim 1934, Appendix.

36 NA, MR 141 geheim 1933, letter 3 February 1933.

37 Snouck Hurgronje later retreated from this position, although the reasons for his change of opinion can no longer be ascertained because the documents containing his advice have been lost. He then joined the government's position. See Gobée and Adriaanse 1957–1965, II: 1598–1599.

however, the younger participants were able to outvote their vindictive elders, who for the most part had been born in the Hadhramaut, and these younger men succeeded in removing the question about the title from the agenda. According to them, this was not a favourable time to renew action. Moreover, they openly asked if it were worth the trouble to return to this subject. Through well-prepared and tactical actions they were able to advance more important subjects, such as the modernization of education and the fight against the hated usurious practices of the Arabs.[38]

Another more unsettling event took place in Semarang at the end of 1934. On October 4, about forty young progressive *sayyid* and *syekh* who had been born in the Netherlands East Indies declared that they no longer viewed Hadhramaut as their motherland, but rather Indonesia, as the Indies were increasingly being called in nationalistic circles. These young progressives took a vow that, as children of the country, they would fight for the territory and society of Indonesia. The next day they founded the Persatoean Arab Indonesia (PAI), the Union of Indonesian Arabs. The union explicitly opposed the divisions in the Arab community and sought to increase the cooperation and solidarity among Indonesian Arabs. At the same time they wanted to liberate them from Hadhrami social relations and integrate them into Indonesian society. For this reason they decided, among other things, to abolish the use of the title *sayyid* within their own circle and to use Malay as their common language.[39]

The founder and leader of the PAI (which existed until the Japanese invasion) was the well-known journalist A.R. Baswedan. At an early age Baswedan, who was born on Java in 1908, strove hard for the emancipation of the Arab community and its integration into the wider Indonesian society. He propagated his ideas in pro-nationalistic newspapers such as *Sin Tit Po*, *Soeara Oemoem*, and *Matahari* (Maskati 1939, 6–14). He fought against the prevailing notion among Arabs that Indonesia was only a temporary domicile and criticized the rancor among *totok* Arabs against deviant views. In *Matahari* he once compared the situation of the Arabs in the archipelago with a bobbing boat that is out of control, being tossed now westwards, now eastwards (Baswedan 1939a, 23).

If feelings in the Arab community had calmed somewhat after the title question, the formation of the PAI caused a new stir. The union's goals were criti-

38 NA, MR 511 geheim 1934, letter 7 April 1934.

39 See NA, MR 463 geheim 1937, letter 7 May 1937; Sanad et al. 1956; Algadri 1984, 161–163; Baswedan 1974.

cized from all sides. Especially the acknowledgement of Indonesia as motherland created resentment within the Arab community. According to Pijper:

> Many Arabs, even within the association itself, could not identify themselves with the thought that one would have to exchange the Arab homeland for an Indonesian motherland; remaining Arabs, it is true, but still giving up much of what earlier generations had considered the highest national inheritance.[40]

After a slow and disputed start, the PAI gained ever more followers, in particular among the *peranakan* Arabs who made up about two thirds of the Arab community. At the time of its fourth congress in 1939, PAI had twenty-eight branches in the Netherlands East Indies. Baswedan regarded this as slow growth and compared it to the "sleeping child" of a Persian queen that had been born only after a pregnancy of five years. According to him, the PAI's ideal needed an even longer period of growth in the minds of the Arabs.[41]

Until 1936 the PAI pursued mainly social, religious, and cultural goals. It published two periodicals, *Sadar* (Conscious) and *Insaf* (Realization) to inform the Arab community about its ideals and pursuits (Abud Sanad et al. 1956, 4). It zealously advocated the expansion of educational facilities in Arab circles and pleaded in this connection for the foundation of three more Dutch-Arab schools, in addition to the existing one in Solo, where children could prepare themselves for further studies.[42] Just like other nationalist-oriented sister organizations, it founded a youth section and a women's association. The effort to emancipate women of Arab descent may be seen as especially revolutionary in Arab circles at that time (Barkah Nahdi 1941, 33–34). The PAI also called on Arabs to end existing usurious practices which, although committed by only a few, made the whole community look bad. By cooperating economically with Indonesians, it hoped moreover to stem the continual flight of capital to Hadhramaut.[43]

As the PAI gained in importance, it also became politically more active. From 1936 on it openly joined the ranks of the nationalists. In 1936 it supported the famous petition by Soetardjo, an Indonesian member of the *volksraad*, in which a careful plea was made for a free and independent Indonesia

40 NA, MR 463 geheim 1937, letter 7 May 1937.

41 NA, MR 463 geheim 1937, "Verslag Arabisch congres te Soerabaia;" NA, MR 582 geheim 1939.

42 In 1930 a private Arab school with a Western curriculum had been taken over by the government and changed into a Dutch-Arab school. See Van der Plas 1931, 182.

43 NA, MR 463 geheim 1937, "Verslag Arabisch congres te Soerabaia."

within the context of a Dutch-Indonesian union. In 1937 it asked the government to admit more Arab members to the *volksraad*, without thereby reducing the number of representatives of other foreign Asian minorities. In addition it exerted itself for equal rights for *peranakan* and *totok* Arabs, arguing that members of the second group should also be able to become Dutch Indies subjects. In 1939 the association joined the Majelis Islam A'la Indonesia (MIAI; the Indonesian High Islamic Council)—a federation of Indonesian Islamic political groups—evidence that it had been recognized by nationalistic sister organizations. In 1939 and 1940 the PAI supported the actions for a full-fledged democratically chosen Indonesian parliament taken by the Gaboengan Politik Indonesia (GAPI), the alliance of Indonesian political parties.[44] The association's increased political orientation is also evident from the change of name it adopted in 1940: from then on the initials PAI stood for Partai Arab Indonesia (Algadri 1984, 165).

The extent of the difference in the attitude of the Arab members of the PAI toward their new motherland is shown in a verse from the association's song:

> Indonesia, symbol of my unity
> Indonesia, land where I was born
> Unity of Arabs in Indonesia
> Shine ever more
> We remain loyal.[45]

In reaction to the PAI, the earlier Indonesian Arab association of al-Almoedi (Indo-Arabisch Verbond) took on a new lease on life under the name of the Indo-Arab Beweging (IAB, Indo-Arab Movement). The movement tried to channel the dissension among those Arabs who disagreed with the PAI, and, in order to guarantee Arab interests, it took a pro-Dutch position. It opposed the PAI's nationalistic ideals and fought for the maintenance of Arab consciousness (Pluvier 1953, 91). It wanted to be part of Indies society but simultaneously wished to maintain close, non-political ties to the people of Hadhramaut. To put an end to the desolate economic situation, in which *peranakan* Arabs in particular found themselves after the years of discord, its leaders argued for the founding of special trade organizations.[46] The movement gained a following in

44 On the political course of the PAl see Algadri 1984, 165–172; Baswedan 1956, 5–8; Baswedan 1941, 23–24; Pluvier 1953, 90–91.

45 NA, MR 1115 geheim 1938, letter 21 November 1938.

46 NA, MR 233 geheim 1939, letter 17 February 1939.

conservative *sayyid* circles, but never had much influence, as the political tide was against it. Political developments in Asia at the end of the 1930s favoured the nationalistic movements.

In a period of less than ten years, the Arab community moved from a preoccupation with problems mostly relating to social identity and feelings of being discriminated against by the *sayyid*, to confronting basic questions of national identity: whether or not to choose Indonesia as their motherland.

5 Conclusion

In the years between the turn of the century and the Japanese invasion in 1942, the Arabs in the Netherlands East Indies experienced important changes in social and national identification. The rigid, hierarchical social order from Hadhramaut was to a large degree overthrown, the relatively isolated Arab community became more open to developments in the wider Indonesian society, and a growing number of Arabs realized that Indonesia rather than Southern Arabia had become their motherland.

Until the beginning of the twentieth century, for the most part, Arab immigrants identified with the Hadhramaut. To be sure, they had settled in the Indonesian archipelago, whether temporarily or permanently, but in principle they had only economic and familial ties to their new environment. Both as Arabs and as Muslims their primary involvement was with developments in their own land, their land of origin, and with the Arab world at large. Interest in developments in the local Indonesian society were limited to the economic nexus. Like so many other immigrants of both Asian and European origin, they saw their new environment primarily as a place to make money. This orientation was strengthened by the Dutch colonial policy. Its policies on immigration, the regulations on travel and residence, and the separate laws for Foreign Orientals made the Arabs perceive the colonial government as hostile to them. This perception led them to become to a certain degree fiercely anti-Dutch. This stance only lessened after the discriminating decrees on migration and settlement were canceled in 1919.

After the turn of the century, more and more Arabs began to express their discontent with the strict maintenance of the Hadhrami social structure in their new environment. To an increasing extent the traditional societal ranking seemed to them an anachronism. Within a relatively short time this development divided the immigrant community into two camps: the conservative *sayyid* who wanted to hold on to the old social order from Hadhramaut and the progressive *syekh* who strove for a democratic society.

The discord manifested itself most clearly in the title fight which took place between 1912 and 1934, and which was not only a symbol of the existing social tensions within the Arab community, but also formed the crux. The winner of the fight was at the same time the winner of the social struggle. Although the colonial government considered the confrontation officially undecided, the *syekh* emerged as the moral winners. Both in a metaphorical sense (i.e. the title fight) and in reality, they had freed themselves from the smothering influence of the *sayyid*. It meant the end of the traditional social order and the coming into being of new identities.

The title fight not only resulted in changes in social identity among the Arabs in the Netherlands East Indies but also had severe consequences for Arab feelings of national identification. In fact, their social and national identities were closely connected, although not perceived as such. Until the beginning of the 1930s, problems within the Arab community dominated all other issues. Above all the Irsyad was an emancipation movement opposed to the discrimination of the *syekh* by the *sayyid*. For the Arab minority it was an anathema for a long time to view Indonesia as their home land. They hardly spoke or wrote about the issue, and only after the unexpected public oath taken by Baswedan and his companions in October 1934 did it become a topic of discussion. Until now that date is remembered as the day on which the Arabs became aware of their Indonesian identity (*Hari Kesadaran Bangsa Indonesia Keturunan Arab*).

The *syekh*, in particular, who had emancipated themselves in a social sense, increasingly realized that, as far as their feelings of nationality were concerned, they were closer to Indonesia than to Southern Arabia. To a considerable degree they had already detached themselves from events in the Hadhramaut, and, without giving up their Arab consciousness, they increasingly identified with their country of residence. But even among the *sayyid* more and more voices were heard urging the recognition of Indonesia as their motherland. The young *peranakan*, in particular, who, like the young *syekh*, felt alienated from their land of origin, became conscious that one could no longer live between two motherlands. The majority of the older *totok sayyid*, however, continued to identify with the Hadramaut, not least because of the loss of their privileged position.

At the end of the 1930s, the greater part of the Arab community had not only come to identify with Indonesia as its motherland, but also to sympathize with the nationalist goals. This consciousness and concern were in particular the result of the activities of the PAI, which closely cooperated with pro-nationalist organizations. In a figurative sense, the PAI demolished the barriers which still stood between the Arabs and the outside Indonesian world. It brought the

Arabs into closer contact with all kinds of autochthonous and allochthonous groups and made them conscious of their own position.

In a timespan of forty years, the Hadhrami minority in the Netherlands East Indies developed from a predominantly Arab-oriented community with an Indonesian imprint into a predominantly Indonesian-oriented group with an Arab signature.

CHAPTER 2

Dutch Colonial Policy Pertaining to Hadhrami Immigrants

While seeking "the ring of the prophet Solomon," as fortune in Arab circles is often called, many Arabs settled in the area which is now Indonesia during the course of history (Van den Berg 1887, 45).* They traded and played an active role in the spread of Islam (Alatas 1997). Some Arabs succeeded in acquiring a great deal of influence in coastal areas. They married women of the local nobility and obtained leading positions at the courts. Several of the Islamic trading states that arose on the north coast of Java in the sixteenth century were ruled by persons of Arab descent (De Graaf and Pigeaud 1974). At the end of the eighteenth century, Arab fortune hunters founded their own states in Sumatra (Siak) and Kalimantan (Pontianak) (Van der Kroef 1955, 16).

After the arrival of the Portuguese and then the Dutch, the number of Arab immigrants gradually decreased. International trade came to be dominated by Europeans, and Arabs in the Indonesian archipelago had to be content with trading at the regional and local level. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, no more than 621 Arabs and Moors, as Muslims from the Coromandel and Malabar coasts were called, lived in Java. "Among the Arabs," according to Raffles (1817, I: 63, 75), were "many merchants, but the majority are priests." In the second half of the nineteenth century, after the gradual opening up of Java and the so-called Outer Islands to the world market, the number of Arab immigrants rose again, particularly after the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869. In 1860 the Netherlands East Indies had 8,909 registered Arab inhabitants, 6,133 of whom lived in Java and Madura (Bakker 1997, 39). Between 1870 and 1900, the Arab minority in the whole archipelago increased from about 13,000 to 27,000 (Van der Kroef 1954, I: 250). An even stronger growth, by both birth and immigration, took place after the turn of the century. In 1920 the Arab community listed 45,000 members, while by the time of the census of 1930 their number had risen to 71,335 with 41,730 in Java and Madura (*Volkstelling 1930*, 1935), As a result of continued immigration, the number of Arabs must have been close to 80,000 on the eve of the Japanese occupation.

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As elsewhere in Southeast Asia, the great majority of Arab immigrants in the second half of the nineteenth and first half of the twentieth century came from Hadhramaut. The second largest group consisted of Arabs from the Hijaz, but their numbers paled into insignificance compared to Hadhramis. Only rarely did migrants from other parts of Arabia find their way to the Indies. While Arabs from the Hijaz did not usually stay long in the archipelago, the number of settlers among Hadhramis was very high. They married local women and were said to prefer an assured existence in the Indies to an uncertain future in Hadhramaut. By the beginning of this century, the number of *muwallad*, descendants of mixed marriages, outnumbered *wulaiti* or newcomers.

From an economic point of view, Arabs were generally successful in their new environment. Together with the Chinese, the largest immigrant community in the colony, the Hadhramis controlled intermediate trade, with each group concentrating on certain products. Quite a few Arabs functioned as money-lenders, real estate owners, or shippers, and they founded textile workshops in several cities (Clarence-Smith 1997). Among the *sayyid*, many acted as religious leaders and preachers, sometimes being treated as holy men. According to Snouck Hurgronje, genealogical descent from the Prophet was frequently abused (Gobée and Adriaanse 1957–1965, II: 1564, 1592).

Despite this economic success, Arabs were at times discontented with the way in which they were treated by the colonial government. Until virtually the end of the existence of the Netherlands East Indies, the population was legally divided into four categories: Europeans; those equated to Europeans; natives (*inlanders*); and those equated to natives. Those equated to Europeans comprised the local Christians and, after 1896, the Japanese. Those having approximately the same status as natives included everyone who was not European or native, and who was Muslim or "Heathen." This category was officially called *vreemde oosterlingen* or Foreign Orientals. They consisted of Chinese and other Asian immigrants, such as Moors, Tamils, Bengalis, and Arabs. For a long time this category included Malays and minorities from neighbouring islands, but indigenous minorities came to be considered as "natives" in the second half of the nineteenth century (*Encyclopaedie* 1917–1921, IV: 636–638; Margadant 1897, 79–89, 265–303; Veth 1875–1907, IV: 104–128).

The rights and obligations of the four categories differed considerably. Although *vreemde oosterlingen* were officially "equals" of the natives, in reality they were subjected to separate laws and rules with regard to government, jurisdiction, taxes, education, landed property, militia units, dress, and, last but not least, freedom of movement and residence. In certain respects, they fell under the rules for Europeans, in other respects under those for natives. Their anomalous position was legitimised by the argument that the economic interest

of the indigenous population should be protected against outside influences, even though the influence of Europeans was never referred to in the same context.

The intermediate position of Asian immigrants in colonial society was consolidated by special legislation designed for them, which extended the racial segmentation of the colony. Chinese and Arabs repeatedly protested against discriminatory measures, refusing to be treated as third rate citizens and asking for the same privileges as Europeans.

Although in principle there was one policy for all Asian minorities, in practice they were often treated differently. Both the interpretation and the application of the restrictive laws varied from group to group, and even from person to person, depending on general colonial interests and the personal preferences of particular officials. This situation often resulted in a certain degree of jealousy and antagonism between the different ethnic groups, who consequently seldom united to put forward common demands.

This article analyses the attitude of the Dutch colonial administration towards the Arab community, as well as the treatment of its members. It also describes the response of the Arab immigrants, by focusing on those aspects of the Foreign Oriental policy that led to the greatest indignation and excitement: the quarter system (*wijkenstelsel*), the pass system (*passenstelsel*), and immigration rules.

1 The Quarter and Pass Systems

Even before Europeans arrived in the Indonesian archipelago, Asian foreigners lived in their own quarters under their own leaders in trading towns. It is not clear whether this type of settlement arose spontaneously, or whether it was imposed by local rulers. Presumably, both factors played a part. At first, the administrators of the Dutch East India Company did not greatly concern themselves with the place of residence of Eastern foreigners, at least not everywhere. For example, the Chinese lived scattered throughout the city of Batavia until 1740, the year of the "Chinese massacre." Only after this incident were they concentrated into a separate quarter, while control on all foreign Asian minorities was tightened up (De Haan 1922, 493–495). It seems that in those years, similar measures were taken in other places. However, in the course of time, enforcement slackened, and more and more immigrants or their descendants succeeded in taking up residence in the countryside.

At the beginning of the nineteenth century, official concern with the quarter system was renewed when the government observed that its officials on Java

had "an inclination" to "amalgamate *vreemde oosterlingen* [...] among the Javanese population." This was "unsuitable," and the government demanded that the "ancient custom to concentrate such foreigners in separate quarters or neighbourhoods under a chief of their own race should be maintained [...] without exception."[1] The government did not intend this measure to be used to drive those Foreign Orientals who lived dispersed throughout the countryside from the interior, but expected to promote their voluntary resettlement in existing and new quarters. In practice, however, it boiled down to forced evacuation. In 1852 and 1855, the regional authorities of Semarang and Krawang designated quarters for Asian foreigners in several cities and towns. Those living in villages had to settle in such quarters within two months of notification. Only those who farmed revenues from the government, worked on European estates, or possessed "houses of stone that were covered with roofing tiles" were exempt from this.[2] In 1866 this regulation came into effect for the whole colony. Settlement in the hinterland was only possible with the explicit consent of regional or local civil servants.[3]

For a long time, Arabs shared quarters with other foreign Muslims. In Batavia this quarter was called Pekojan, after the Kojas or Moors who outnumbered other Muslim minorities until the beginning of the nineteenth century. After 1880, however, the number of Arab immigrants gradually increased and Pekojan ultimately became a real Arab quarter. A similar development took place in other cities. The constant growth of the Arab community in the Indies is apparent from the establishment of new quarters, the creation of the rank of quartermaster (*wijkmeester*), and the appointments and salaries of quarter officials. In 1873 the Netherlands East Indies had thirty-five quarters for "Other Foreign Orientals", of whom Arabs had become the greatest group, twenty-three on Java and twelve on the Outer Islands. In following years, new quarters were continually opened, including those in Lumajang and Kraksaan (1874), Ambarawa and Buleleng (1883), Jambi (1889), Manado and Gorontalo (1894), Ampenan (1895) and Denpasar (1908). In almost any trading town of importance, an Arab quarter was established.

At first, the heads of the Muslim quarters were officially called "Heads of non-Chinese Foreign Orientals". Later they were named "Head of the Arabs and Other Foreign Orientals" or just "Head of the Arabs." As the number of Arabs in the foreign Muslim quarters increased, so did the positions awarded to their leaders. In medium sized communities, such as Tegal or Bondowoso, they held

1 *Staatsblad van Nederlandsch-Indië* (henceforth *SNI*) 1835 no. 37.

2 *SNI* 1852 no. 45 and 1855 no. 5.

3 *SNI* 1866 no. 57.

the rank of lieutenant. In Batavia, Semarang, and Surabaya, the Arab colonies were headed by captains, assisted by quarter-masters, clerks, and messengers. All were paid by the colonial government.[4]

Owing to the continual influx of Hadhrami immigrants in the second half of the nineteenth century, the quarters became overcrowded. The Arabist Van den Berg (1887, 49), who often mixed with Arabs, writes that "the Arab quarters, with few exceptions, are dirty, and offer no attractions to European visitors; the interior, also, of the houses is wanting in all they appreciate." The Dutch politician Van Deventer found the quarters a "danger for public health" and pleaded at the beginning of this century for an improvement in hygiene or for an extension of the quarters.[5] Not everybody, however, made the connection between poor living conditions and overpopulation. Some officials reproached both the Chinese and the Arabs for their "lack of cleanliness."[6] There was apparently no shortage of prejudice in government circles.

For many *vreemde oosterlingen* the obligation to reside in special quarters formed an impediment to carrying on their business or even to supporting themselves. Owing to fierce competition, traders were increasingly dependent on the purchase and sale of products in areas which were situated further and further away from the quarters. Many tried to settle clandestinely in the interior. The administration did not have sufficient means of control at its disposal to impose the quarter system in the remotest parts of the country. *Muwallad*, in particular, often succeeded in deceiving officials.

Even more oppressive than the quarter system was the system of passes, which obliged Eastern immigrants on Java and Madura for a very long time to ask the local authorities for passes to travel by land and sea.[7] Until 1863 this also applied to the indigenous population. On a travel pass were inscribed the name of the holder, the place of departure, the destination, and the names of towns which one was allowed to visit *en route*. The system seriously restricted the mobility of Foreign Orientals, who, as traders, needed to travel. Each new route required permission.

From 1820 to 1874, access to the Priangan (Preanger) region of southwestern Java became even more difficult. Asian foreigners from nearby Batavia, Bogor (Buitenzorg), Krawang and Cirebon (Cheribon) who wanted to enter this frontier area needed additional permission from the authorities there. Only "blacksmiths, carpenters, cartwrights, and other useful artisans" and persons who for

4 See for example *SNI* 1915 no. 466.

5 Nationaal Archief, Den Haag (henceforth NA), *Verbaal* (henceforth Vb.) 22 September 1908/18.

6 NA, Vb. 22 September 1908/18.

7 *SNI* 1816 no. 25 and 1818 no. 60.

years had enjoyed the confidence of local officials were given free access. In 1836 similar measures were proclaimed for the central Javanese principalities of Surakarta and Yogyakarta.[8]

After the pass system for indigenous inhabitants was abolished in 1863, Eastern foreigners could apply for a travel pass valid for one year. In each regional capital along the approved route, however, passes had to be presented for inspection, and without the permission of regional authorities itinerant traders were not allowed to stay longer than 24 hours in rural districts. In the interest of public order, passes could be refused, and in case of negligence, withdrawn.[9] In subsequent years, the pass system was introduced into economically important areas outside Java and Madura, such as Sulawesi (Celebes) (1864), West Kalimantan (Borneo) (1865), and Bangka (1870).

By using tricks, paying bribes, and enlisting accomplices, the oppressed Arabs tried to evade the detested system as much as possible, even though violations were severely punished. The system of passes was "a constant source of offence" and a "vexatious nuisance," in particular because of the condescending and arbitrary way in which the Arabs were treated, in comparison with other *vreemde oosterlingen*.[10] Europeans generally disliked Arabs. Van den Berg (1887, 49; 1899, 40) mentions their negative characteristics to be "their freedom of speech, not to say insolence," their vengefulness, meddlesomeness in religious matters, "liking for law suits" and their complete absence of reticence in making money. According to Snouck Hurgronje, many civil servants "misused the directions, wherever possible, to obstruct the life of the Arabs" (Gobée and Adriaanse 1957–1965, II: 1533–1534).[11] Some were driven by racial prejudice. They indulged in plaguing Arabs and did not recoil from refusing passes to generally esteemed persons who wanted to go on an outing or a trip to a health resort.

The official reason for concentrating Foreign Orientals in separate quarters and restricting their mobility remained their supposedly harmful influence on the welfare of indigenous inhabitants. The open-hearted, naive population, it was said, should be protected from outsiders by minimising contacts. The Arabs were, without doubt, seen as the most harmful group. Government reports up to the beginning of this century often refer to Arabs as usurers, swindlers, and parasites. Even in 1919, the Resident of Pamekasan (in Madura) held the opinion that "the Arab [...] usually tries to get out of his victim whatever he can,

8 *SNI* 1836 no. 4.

9 *SNI* 1863 no. 83.

10 NA, Vb. 28 June 1919.

11 For Snouck's opinion of the Arabs, see also Algadri 1984.

and often does not let him go before he has completely plundered him."[12] Along with their influence on economic life, administrators time and again criticized the Arab role in the religious and political fields. They were seen as fanatical propagandists of Islam and as supporters of Pan-Islamism. Both factors were feared to have an unfavourable effect on the mentality and disposition of the local population, which in the long run might undermine Dutch authority. In short, government officials assumed there was every reason for taking a strong position against Arabs.

The distrust of Arabs was based on stereotypes. In reality their economic behaviour hardly differed from that of other foreigners and well-to-do locals. Also, their influence in religious matters was greatly exaggerated, even though the *sayyid* were highly esteemed (particularly in the countryside), graves of prominent Arabs were often venerated as holy places, and some Arabs felt themselves superior to indigenous Muslims. But local hajjis were far more important for the spread and deepening of Islam in the nineteenth century, when the number of hajjis rose from several hundreds to several thousands per year. Some stayed in Mecca for a time and returned as religious teachers.[13]

Allegations about Pan-Islamic activities were also mistaken, in particular by Snouck Hurgronje (Schmidt 1992, 49–143). The Arab minority was not really interested in Pan-Islamism, but used it to express its grievances against the quarter and pass system, and to improve its status as third-rate citizens. Until far into the nineteenth century, the Arabs in the Indies were deprived of the means and contacts to change their social position. Evasion, law suits, and petitions hardly produced any positive results. The rise of Pan-Islamism, which strove for unity among Muslims everywhere, appeared promising in that respect.

After 1870, the sultan-caliph of the Ottoman Empire, who claimed sovereignty over Hadhramaut, presented himself more insistently as the patron of all Muslims, to save his crumbling authority at home. The Arabs in the Indies then tried to make contact with the Porte or its representatives. In 1873 members of the Arab community sent their first petition to the sultan to protest against their fate (Van Krieken 1985, 20; Schmidt 1992, 90–91). After 1883, they brought their complaints to the notice of the Ottoman consul, who from that year was stationed in Batavia.

The Ottoman consuls eagerly took up the invitation to defend Arab interests and zealously advocated improvement of their lot. By providing some Arabs

12 NA, Vb. 5 September 1919/22.

13 NA, Vb. 28 June 1919/16.

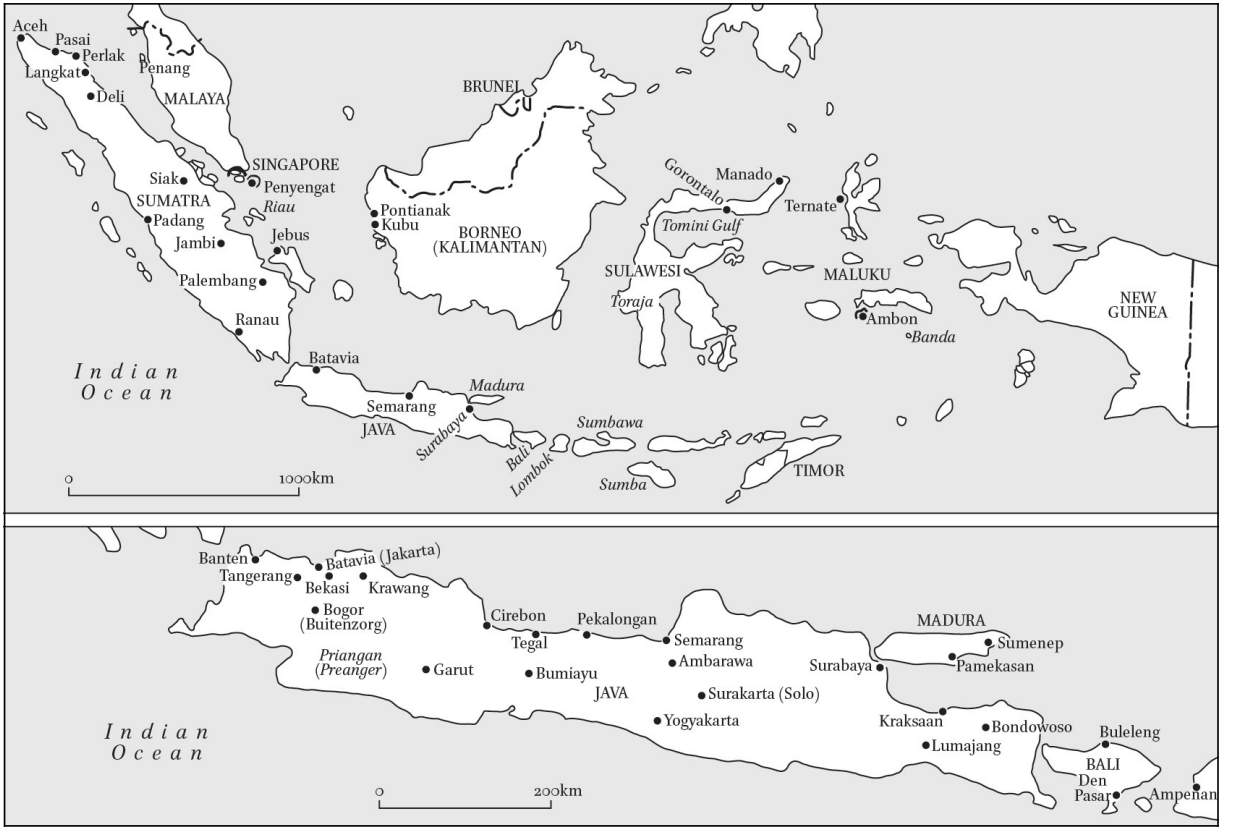

FIGURE 1 The Malay World and Java

with Ottoman passports, thus entitling them to the status of Europeans, they tried to pressurise the colonial government. The government, however, only accepted "Ottomans" as Europeans if they or one of their parents had been born in the European part of the empire.[14] This did not discourage the Ottoman consuls from repeatedly trying. Every little success contributed in the eyes of the Arabs to undermining the division of colonial society along ethnic lines. Thanks to the consuls, a small number of Arab boys were sent to study in Istanbul around the turn of the century. While they did not return as Pan-Islamic agents, as the Dutch had feared, their homecoming, in 1904, provided a welcome opportunity for Batavian Arabs to vent their feelings about colonial policy.

At the end of the nineteenth century, several articles appeared in Ottoman and Arab newspapers and periodicals, criticising the treatment of Arabs in the Indies. In 1896 the Egyptian *al-Mu'ayyad* described the malicious character of the Dutch colonial state and the extortion to which Arabs were subjected (Gobée and Adriaanse 1957–1965, II: 1532). Articles with the same purport were published in *Thamarât al-funûn*, published in Beirut, and *Servet* and *al-Maʿlûmât* in Istanbul (Gobée and Adriaanse 1957–1965, II: 1535–1540, 1546–1552; Schmidt 1992, 119–142). Both the information in the Arab press and the actions of the Ottoman consuls embarrassed the colonial government and regularly led to diplomatic *démarches*.[15]

The protests ("agitation" as it was called in Dutch reports) of Arabs through Pan-Islamic channels contributed to the adaptation and eventual abolition of the quarter and pass systems. In 1894 Snouck Hurgronje, who feared the consequences of Pan-Islamism, pleaded in one of his reports to the governor-general for the "relaxation and reduction of the existing directions with regard to the issuing of passes" (Gobée and Adriaanse 1957–1965, II: 1534). In the following years, he became increasingly convinced that the restrictions should be lifted. In 1904 he wrote:

> The Arabs here have the feeling of people for whom the entrance to a house is open, but who are not allowed to go further than the narrow and musty corridor, and who only come into touch with the other inmates, when these go from one room to the other.
>
> GOBÉE and ADRIAANSE 1957–1965, II: 1581

14 NA, Vb. 28 June 1919/16. For Ottoman consuls, see Gobée and Adriaanse 1957–1965, II: 1717–1751. For colonial policy, see Schmidt 1992, 91–102. Cf. Mandal 1997.

15 NA, Vb. 29 June 1910/29.

Although Snouck Hurgronje was one of the most prominent advocates of the abolition of both the pass and the quarter system, he was not alone. Particularly in the Netherlands, the discomfort with the way *vreemde oosterlingen* were treated increased. Firstly, there was the international dimension. China worried about discrimination against its subjects in the Indies. Secondly, the system no longer functioned. An official investigation showed that the obligation to live in quarters was circumvented on a large scale, due to the absence of up to date registers. The system of passes had become unfathomable as a result of the large number of requests.

More important, however, was a change in colonial policy. Politicians increasingly felt that colonial policy should primarily serve the interests of the indigenous population. After the turn of the century, this view gradually gained ground within the colony. The supporters of the Ethical Policy also developed a standpoint about Foreign Orientals that was diametrically opposed to former ideas. They believed that foreign Asian minorities should no longer be isolated from the population at large, but should serve the others as an example. Their activity, spirit of enterprise, and thrift were now conceived to have an educational value. In the interest of improving agriculture, industry, and trade, Foreign Orientals should have the opportunity to move about freely. Not isolation, but competition was now seen as the guiding principle for the development of the population (Van den Doel 1994, 161–184).

During Fock's term as Colonial Secretary (1905–1908), a start was made by thoroughly revising the minority policy. In the long run, this was to lead to the abolition of the pass system and a relaxation of the quarter system, although admission to the Indies would at the same time be restricted. The most important considerations of the government for the abolition of the travel regulations were that impediments to mobility were an encroachment upon the personal freedom of immigrants, and that free intercourse between the foreign Asian minorities and the indigenous population would benefit the latter.[16] Therefore, in 1908 the quarter officers and other notables were permitted to travel through the country without passes.[17] In 1911 *vreemde oosterlingen* in Java and Madura no longer needed a pass to travel in these islands "along the main thoroughfares, the railway, or tram between capitals of residencies, regencies, districts and sub-districts," as well as along main roads between market places and those places in which quarters for their nationality could be found.[18] Finally in 1914, the system of passes was abolished in Java and Madura, with the exception of

16 NA, Vb. 22 September 1908/18.

17 *SNI* 1910 no. 208.

18 *SNI* 1910 no. 536.

the Central Javanese principalities. On the Outer Islands, however, it remained in force for several more years.

The dissolution of the quarter system took more time. Although the colonial government was aware that the compulsory settlement of Asian foreigners hampered their beneficial influence on the population at large, the quarters were maintained as long as possible. From an administrative point of view, this was easier. Besides, in spite of the rhetoric about liberty and progress, the opinion persisted that Foreign Orientals would be a harmful influence in some ways. Therefore the government adopted an ambiguous course. It decided to enlarge the settlement possibilities for the Asian foreigners by opening even more new quarters. In Java alone there were still 220 districts without quarters for Asian outsiders. In 1910 the foreign Asians in Java and Madura, with the exception of the Central Javanese principalities, were free to choose a place of residence, with the understanding that in places where a quarter existed they should settle there. In places with more than one hundred residents of one nationality, a new quarter was opened. One could receive a special permit to reside outside the quarters, if this was in the interest of trade and industry. However, this policy was never realised, as freedom of movement was not compatible with restrictions on place of residence. Therefore, the detested quarter system was finally abolished in 1919.

Initially, many government officials wanted to perpetuate both systems for the Arabs, as they considered the negative effects of this group much greater than the positive ones. The Resident of Priangan asked the government not to withdraw the passes in his district, because of the undesirable behaviour of local Arabs in religious matters.[19] The drafter of the new bill, however, insisted on a uniform regulation for all categories of Asian foreigners. Otherwise, the Arabs "might interpret this exclusion as a measure against the Mohammedan religion."[20] In his opinion it was sufficient to keep a vigilant eye on this group. In 1905, Java and Madura had 19,145 Arab inhabitants, roughly 6 percent of the total number of *vreemde oosterlingen* (*Koloniaal Verslag* 1905). In the event, the government found "no reasons to deny a few thousand Arabs, what will be granted to many tens of thousands of Chinese."[21]

19 NA, Vb. 28 June 1919/16. Only 124 Arabs lived in this area.

20 NA, Vb. 22 September 1908.

21 NA, Vb. 28 June 1919/16.

2 Immigration Policy

While the mobility of *vreemde oosterlingen* became increasingly limited, their admission into the country, paradoxically, became freer. Except for a few years, the colonial government tried to prevent the immigration of Eastern foreigners as much as possible until 1866. After the colony was opened up for private enterprise, however, immigration conditions were relaxed considerably.[22] In practice, every Asian foreigner who could prove his identity and was without evil intent was allowed to enter the colony for six months. When an individual wanted to stay longer or settle down for good, it was sufficient to demonstrate sufficient means of support. Thus, restrictions of movement within the country were at odds with lenient rules of entry.

This liberal immigration policy was extended into the twentieth century. Starting in 1911, almost no differences in entry conditions existed for Western and Eastern immigrants into Java and Madura, although the formalities for newcomers had increased.[23] The number of ports of disembarkation was limited, and all had to pay an entry fee, except the Dutch. In addition, immigrants had to be able to demonstrate that they were in the position of earning a given income (in 1913, twenty-five guilders a month). The first immigration term was prolonged to two years. To exclude undesirables, the Governor-General was authorised to refuse admittance or impose onerous conditions, at his own discretion, for those who were deemed harmful for the economic interests of the local population.[24] For that reason the government installed immigration commissions comprising the heads of the Chinese, Arab, Moorish and Bengali communities, as well as various Dutch officials. In 1916 these rules of admittance were extended to the Outer Islands.[25]

The special authority granted to the Governor-General had unexpected and radical results for Hadhrami immigrants. Almost from the beginning, his power to refuse admittance to economically undesirable persons was used to minimise immigration from Hadhramaut. In 1908, the governor had pressed for an immigration ban on Arabs. Because of their "usury" and "fanatical propaganda", he considered them as "disruptive elements." They were "of no use […] for national prosperity."[26] To counterbalance the generosity of allowing local Arabs to move freely, it was necessary to bar further Arab immigrants.

22 *SNI* 1872 no. 40.
23 *SNI* 1911 no. 138 and 1912 no. 10.
24 NA, Vb. 29 June 1910/29.
25 *SNI* 1916 no. 47.
26 NA, Vb. 27 November 1908/50.

Both the Foreign Secretary and the Council of the Indies (Raad van Indië) did not agree with this proposed exclusion. The council considered Arabs no more harmful than other *vreemde oosterlingen*. Moreover, in their opinion the Arab community had, in contrast to the Chinese, never disturbed public order and security.[27] The Foreign Secretary pointed to the international consequences of such a decision. Their advice carried no weight, although the Governor-General decided to limit his actions to people from Hadhramaut. From 1912 a "sharpened control" for the admittance of Hadhramis was introduced, which meant that every member of that ethnic group who could be banned on the basis of existing regulations should be stopped at the border. As result, only 748 Hadhramis were allowed to enter between 1912 and 1917.[28]

In 1918 the admittance of Hadhramis was further impeded. The authority of the Governor-General to bar undesirable individuals was now used to exclude the whole group. In a secret letter, regional and local government officials and immigration commissions were urged to obstruct Hadhrami immigration as much as possible. Only husbands and consanguine relatives up to the third degree of esteemed Hadhrami families who had lived in the Indies for at least forty years were allowed to enter, provided that they could support themselves. Newcomers awaiting the decision of the immigration commission were lodged in immigration sheds.[29]

The exclusion of Hadhramis was to a great extent the result of the ideas of Snouck Hurgronje, the most important advisor for Arab Affairs. Although he was a fervent advocate of revoking restrictions on travel and residence, and favoured Arab integration with the rest of the population, he was from the outset a stubborn champion of a ban on immigration from Hadhramaut. However contradictory these standpoints may appear, they sprang from the same considerations, namely that the group formed a threat to the mental health of the population and that, from an economic point of view, they had nothing valid to offer.

The confidential letter, which did not stay secret long as Arabs sat on immigration commissions, threw the Arab community into commotion. Although Hadhramis were aware of the more rigid application of immigration rules in previous years, this letter came as a most unpleasant shock. Weekly, the Arab colony was confronted with the consequences of the new policy. Traders, marriage partners for daughters, future business associates, employees, and relatives by marriage were stopped and detained in sheds until there was a ship to

27 Ibid.
28 NA, Vb. 28 June 1919/16.
29 Ibid.

Singapore or Al Mukalla. Persons who were born in the Indies or had lived there for a long time were ruthlessly sent away. The guests of prominent Hadhrami families, who through the years had been very loyal to Dutch authority, were rudely arrested. The secretary of the immigration commission in Surabaya, ex-officer Baerveldt, was particularly fanatical. He even detained Hadhramis from neighbouring islands who wanted to settle on Java or who came to conduct trade. Baerveldt created unrest by his arrest of a horse dealer from Sumba, who wanted to unload his animals in Surabaya. Afraid that he would not get rid of the horses, the captain of the freighter refused to hand over the trader and went on to Batavia. There the cargo was unloaded without any difficulties. On their way back to Sumba, the trader was arrested in Surabaya.[30]

Indignation was so great that the internal divisions which troubled the Arab community in those days were temporarily put aside (De Jonge 1993; Mobini-Kesheh 1997). What exacerbated the resentment was the unequal treatment imposed on Hadhramis in comparison to Chinese and Hijazi Arabs. The "higher and rigorous stipulations" imposed on Hadhramis in all situations, were seen as extremely unjust, and the accusation that they were "harmful elements" was considered a grave insult. They expressed their displeasure with the secrecy of the immigration measures and were of the opinion that the whole community had to pay for the mistakes of a few.[31]

Different groups exerted pressure on the government to revoke these unjust measures. In several quarters, Arabs agitated against leaders who were considered accomplices of European officials. Sayyid Ismāʿil b. ʿAbdallāh al-ʿAttas (Alatas), the Arab member of the *volksraad* (pseudo-parliament), toured the Arab quarters in Java to inform himself of discontent, and to gather information about persons who had not been admitted. Initially, he asserted his disbelief that the government had proclaimed a ban on Hadhrami immigration, and he blamed narrow-minded civil servants for the unrest. Later, he had to admit that the facts indeed pointed to a plot against the Hadhramis. On his return, he asked the Governor-General for an explanation.

The leaders of Sarekat Islam, the first large-scale nationalist movement in the colony, publicly supported Hadhramis by denying that the influence of Arabs on the economy differed from that of Europeans and Chinese. They argued that Arab investments benefited the population, while the profits of European enterprises were often sent abroad. Moreover, they perceived in the

30 Koninklijk Instituut voor Taal-, Land-, en Volkenkunde (henceforth KITLV), Collectie Westerse Handschriften, H 885.

31 NA, Vb. 28 June 1919/16.

measures an anti-Islamic tendency.[32] Both the foreign and local Arab press cried out against the discriminating treatment. Even Britain, which after World War I considered Hadhramaut to be within its sphere of influence, intervened. It considered all Hadhramis as "protected British subjects" and demanded that they be allowed to enter the Indies without difficulties.[33]

Within government circles the policy came under attack. In particular, the Office for Native and Arab Affairs vehemently opposed the exclusion of "our most faithful and loyal subjects."[34] At the beginning of the century, the office still favoured the exclusion of Hadhramis, but due to "substantial changes" at home and abroad, such as emerging nationalism in Asia, it later declared itself against a policy that did not respect individuals.

In the first half of 1919, the director of the civil service wrote to all the Residents in the archipelago asking whether they thought it necessary to refuse admittance to Hadhramis for economic reasons. All except two thought that there were no longer any important reasons to discriminate against Hadhramis. One should not interpret this to mean that they had become more progressive, for they uttered the same old prejudices against the Arab minority. But most saw the inconsistency of the policy. One wrote, "in any event, a hundred Hadhramis often do less wrong than one Dutch Social-Democrat."[35]

In the middle of 1919, as a result of protests and recommendations, the special immigration conditions were mitigated. Immigrants who came in order to marry or become business partners, in effect the majority of immigrants, were allowed to enter immediately. Two months later, at the particular instance of the Foreign Secretary who wanted to avoid a conflict with Britain, the secret conditions were completely withdrawn.[36] Snouck reluctantly agreed, although he still thought that the immigration of Hadhramis should be restricted as much as possible for religious and political reasons.[37]

3 Conclusion

Although Arabs in the Netherlands Indies formally had the same unequal position as other *vreemde oosterlingen*, in practice they encountered more dis-

32 NA, Vb. 28 June 1919/16. See Azra 1997 and Clarence-Smith 1997 for Hadhramis and the foundation of Sarekat Islam.

33 NA, Vb. 10 February 1921/XI.

34 KITLV, Collectie Westerse Handschriften, H 885.

35 NA, Vb. *5* September 1919 no. 22.

36 NA, Vb. 1 August 1919/111.

37 NA, Vb. 1 August 1919/111 and Vb. 21 June 1920/46.

crimination. This exceptional position was the result of several factors. Firstly, the Arab minority was seen as more damaging to the welfare of the population at large than other foreign trading groups. Secondly, the government was apprehensive about their influence in religious matters. Thirdly, after the rise of Pan-Islamism it was thought that the Arabs would undermine Dutch authority. These ideas did not reflect the actual situation. There are no indications that the economic policies of the Arabs were different from those of the Chinese, Europeans, or local inhabitants. And the role of the Arabs in the process of Islamisation paled into insignificance when compared to that of local hajjis. Pan-Islamism did not take root as a political ideology and was only exploited to put pressure on the government to end discrimination. In fact, both lower and higher civil servants were guided to a large degree by persistent prejudices concerning Arabs. Ironically, the situation that the government tried to prevent was actually created, to a certain extent, as a result of Arab reactions to official restrictions.

For a long time Arab inhabitants of the East Indies reacted to discriminatory measures in the same way as other foreign Asians, by patient submission, passive resistance, and evasion. Only after the Arabs discovered that they were treated worse than other *vreemde oosterlingen* with regard to the issuing of travel passes and residence permits, did they resort to public and collective action. Their leaders contacted the governments of friendly foreign powers and foreign organizations devoted to their cause. In addition, they enlisted the support of the international Arab press. Foreign indignation contributed to a high degree to the abolition of the measures that interfered with their freedom of movement.

The restrictive immigration regulations for Arabs in general and for Hadhramis in particular, which ultimately resulted in immigration being secretly prohibited altogether, were primarily questioned in the local press and the *volksraad*, which first met in 1918. For fear of an international scandal, the colonial government was forced to revoke the discriminatory treatment of Arabs.

Without doubt, the capricious and narrow-minded policy pertaining to Arabs in the East Indies seriously hindered the integration of Arab immigrants into colonial society at large. In particular, it hampered the development of the economic potential of this entrepreneurial minority. The only positive effect was, as descendants nowadays like to emphasise, that Arabs were forced to be even more inventive and energetic in making a living than they already were. As a result, after the abolition of restrictions on movement and settlement, Arabs manifested themselves even more clearly in all fields of society than before.

CHAPTER 3

Abdul Rahman Baswedan and the Emancipation of the Hadhramis in Indonesia

Abdul Rahman Baswedan (1908–1986), an Indonesian of Hadhrami descent, was one of the champions of the emancipation and integration of the Hadhrami minority in the Netherlands East Indies and, later, Indonesia.* As a child, he grew up in this relatively closed immigrant community that, despite its small size of 45,000 members in 1920 and more than 70,000 in 1930, was riven by internal conflicts.[1] These conflicts had to do with whether the immigrants should continue to adhere to the values, norms, habits, beliefs and ideals that were prevalent in Hadhramaut, their region of origin in the southern part of Yemen, or whether they should adopt those that were dominant in their new environment. They were no exception. Similar problems also arose in the other foreign communities in the Indies, such as the Chinese and the Europeans, but nowhere did they lead to such dissension as among the Hadhramis.

In its early years, the Hadhrami community in the Indies was marked by a rather rigid, descent-based, hierarchical structure, which resembled that at home in Hadhramaut (Van den Berg 1886, 32–48; Bujra 1971, 13–53). The relationships among the different strata—*sayyid*, *syekh*, *qabili*, and *masakin*—were governed by explicit rules. Moreover, within these layers, some families, clans, or tribes had a higher status than others, and this hierarchy largely determined the relationships among the people concerned.[2]

With the passage of time, all sorts of cracks began to appear in this traditional structure in the Indies and many new divides emerged, perhaps most pertinently between rich and poor. Rich merchants of *masakin* origin were, for example, increasingly less inclined to address the *sayyid* as superiors, and avoided them as much as possible. The *sayyid*, in their turn, blamed the "parvenus" for undermining the moral order of the community (Schrieke 1921). Descent, however, continued to play an important role in Hadhrami circles.

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* This article is a slightly shortened version of the original text that was published in *Asian Journal of Social Science* 2004, 32 (3): 373–400.

1 For more figures on the Hadhrami community, see chapter 1 and 11; De Jonge 1997, 94–95; *Volkstelling 1930* 1935.

2 See chapter 1.

Another division, which also acquired significance, was that between the newcomers or "pure" Hadhramis, called *wulaiti* or *totok*, and the Indo-Hadhramis, called *muwallad* or *peranakan* Arab, who were descendants of mixed marriages.[3] The relationship between the *totok* and the *peranakan* has always been complex. The newcomers, generally speaking, were daring, and had a quick temper and self-confidence—typical of a people bred in a desert-like region plagued by continuous internecine conflicts as Arabia was at that time. On the other hand, the Indo-Hadhramis, especially those whose families had settled in Java a long time ago, had in general lost the eagerness and ruthlessness of first-generation immigrants. For the *totok*, Hadhramaut (their region of origin) and not the colony (the area of settlement) was the homeland. They had little interest in what took place in the Indies, happy to ignore this as long as they could earn a living. They imposed this orientation on the Indo-Hadhramis, most of whom had never set foot on the Arabian peninsula and who, often without realizing it, had a greater affinity with the indigenous society. In many respects, the *totok* left a heavy imprint on the comings and goings of members of the Hadhrami community. They not only largely controlled access to means of livelihood, but also monopolized the political and cultural discourse. Their loyalty to their region of origin was boundless, and they stubbornly held on to Hadhrami norms and values that were seen to be more superior to Indonesian ones.

Another important divide, which ran through all social layers, was that between conservatives and progressives in the fields of religion and education, between Jamiat Kheir (1901), Al-Irsyad (1915) and Rabithah Alawiyah (1927) (Noer 1973, 58–63; *Menjelang* 1981). The aspiration of these associations was to strengthen religion and education in Arab circles, although the way this was realised differed considerably.

Apart from these social and religious partitions, the Hadhrami community, as with all societies, had divisions according to sex and age. The members of the younger generations often had problems with the behaviour and the opinions of the older generations, in which the men especially clung to Arab values and customs. For the women, life was certainly not a bed of roses. Life in the Arab quarters differed tremendously from life in other parts of society. Just as in the Arabian peninsula, women were excluded from public life. For Indonesian women, in particular, this must often have been very difficult to accept.

3 *Wulaiti* and *muwallad* are Arabic, while *totok* and *peranakan* are Indonesian terms. The Indonesian terms also apply to Indo-Europeans and Indo-Chinese.

In the early decades of the twentieth century, all these changes, disparities and concomitant tensions generated numerous conflicts within the numerically small and relatively closed Hadhrami community.[4] At an early age, Baswedan already recognized the gravity of the situation and decided to dedicate himself to solving the existing problems. He saw the *wulaiti* als the source of all evil and openly exposed and attacked the domination of the *totok* in Arab circles. In so doing, he succeeded in shifting attention from what he considered to be the outdated *sayyid-syekh* divide to a more serious split, that between *totok* and *peranakan*.

As a journalist and as a politician, both before and after Indonesian independence, Baswedan made an active contribution to the gradual dissolution of the isolation in which the population group to which he belonged had manoeuvred itself into. It is by no means an exaggeration to suggest that he devoted his life to the Hadhrami cause. Although Baswedan was not the only Hadhrami who fought to gain his compatriots a proper place in society—Salim Maskati, Hoesin Bafagih, and Hamid Algadri, to mention only a few, also did their bit—his contribution was pioneering in several respects. Besides publicly attacking the newcomers or "pure" Hadhramis, he was, for example, also the one who took the initiative toward the founding of an Indo-Hadhrami movement which, quite radically, substituted Indonesia for Hadhramaut as homeland. In many ways, Baswedan was ahead of his time. He saw and, subsequently, pointed out in his articles and speeches developments that the greater number of the Hadhramis had not been previously aware of. Unlike others in his environment, he was well informed of what took place in the wider colonial society among indigenous Indonesians, Europeans, and Chinese; as well as in the Western and Islamic worlds.

Baswedan, an autodidact, was a versatile person. Besides newspaper articles, he wrote poems and plays which he himself directed. Frequently, his literary work was subservient to his political goals and religious beliefs, which were likewise intertwined. Modernist ideas about the relationship between the state and Islam, propagated by scholars such as Muhammad Abduh and Rasyid Ridha, were a constant source of inspiration to him.

Baswedan was also a man of character; he dared to take risks and to row against the tide. He was a great strategist and a born orator who was not loath to address a hostile audience. Although he was confronted with plenty of opposition, he remained an irrepressible optimist. He lived for his ideals but without losing respect for the opinions of others. As a Member of Parliament after World War II, he maintained friendly relationships with political opponents.

4 See previous chapters.

In this article, the emphasis is on the efforts and the achievements made by Baswedan for the improvement of the lot of his fellow Hadhramis. In this examination of his career, however, I also want to cast light on the frustrations and aspirations which held sway in Hadhrami circles. By paying attention to his life, matters that otherwise might remain hidden come to the fore. On the other hand, his importance can only be assessed if the main characteristics of the Hadhrami community in the early decades of the twentieth century are known, that is, its place within the colonial society and the internal social strata that existed with concomitant ideologies.

1 Growing Up in Ampel[5]

Abdul Rahman Awad Baswedan was born in 1908 in Ampel, the old Arab quarter or *kampung Arab*, in Surabaya; at that time, this place was home to the largest Hadhrami community in the Indies. His grandfather, Umar bin Muhammad bin Abdullah (1842–1911), had migrated to the Indies as a young man with his elder brother, Ali. They belonged to a well-known *syekh* family from the town of Shibam in the heart of Hadhramaut. Both became the progenitors of the large Baswedan family in Surabaya. Umar married an Indo-Hadhrami girl from this harbour city, with whom he had ten children, including Baswedan's father, Awad. As with almost all Hadhramis, he earned his living by trading; although, according to his descendants, he derived more satisfaction from being a Muslim scholar. His children and grandchildren received strict religious upbringings. Umar had also founded a family in Hadhramaut, which he visited from time to time. Awad, Baswedan's father, married four times and had seven children, all from his first two marriages. Baswedan's mother and Awad's first wife, Aliyah, originated from neighbouring Bangil, a small Hadhrami-dominated town. She died when Baswedan was ten years old, after which he was brought up by a grandmother, aunts, and his stepmother.

5 To reconstruct Baswedan's life, I made use of different sources of information: archival material, interviews, publications about him, and articles written by him. A major source includes the interviews that Chaidir Anwar Makarim (henceforth Interview Makarim) recorded with him in March 1974 and August 1975 within the framework of the Oral History Project of the National Archive of the Indonesian Republic (ANRI). Eighteen cassette tapes are preserved in this archive. Another important source is Suratmin's (1989) study on Baswedan, based partly on interviews with contemporaries and companions. I am very grateful to Baswedan's son, Drs. Rasyid Baswedan, and other members of the Arab community for additional data. This section is primarily based on Interview Makarim, cassette I, side A, and cassette II, side B; Suratmin 1989, 1–33; and Tashadi and Poliman 1980/1981, 61–63.

Awad and his brother owned a wholesaling business (Al Umat) that employed almost all the male family members.

During his childhood, Baswedan's relatives all lived nearby and, in particular, the men and children met almost daily. The related families formed a tight network that supported one another through fair winds and foul. As in the Middle East, there was a deep separation between the men's world and that of the women. Women seldom ventured outside the house, and the daily necessities were usually bought by husbands or sons. For the few times that his mother and aunts did go out, they were, according to Baswedan, veiled; and when they left Ampel, they travelled in covered coaches.

At school, Baswedan was, for the first time, emphatically confronted with the social distances that existed between the different classes in the Hadhrami community. At the age of six, he attended the Madrasah Al Khairiyah, which had been founded by local Hadhramis. Inside and outside the classroom, the *qabili* and *sayyid* children, just like their parents, treated pupils from the other classes high-handedly. They were abused, scoffed at and nagged. After a scuffle between his elder brother and a scion of a prominent *qabili* family, Baswedan's father removed both his sons from this school. The brother thereupon started to work in the family shop, while Baswedan was sent to another Hadhrami school, Al-Ma'arif. He later spent some time at the Madrasah Al-Irsyad in Batavia where Ahmad Soerkati taught, and also at the Hadramaut School in Surabaya where Muhammad bin Hashim, the editor of *Al-Bashir*—the first Arab periodical in the Indies—was in charge. At the Al-Irsyad school, he was taught that people had equal rights and that the social hierarchy imported from Hadhramaut was an anachronism. At the pro-*sayyid* Hadramaut school, he heard the exact opposite. In all these schools, lessons were given in Malay interspersed with Arabic terms and expressions. At home, Baswedan spoke Javanese, the language of the mothers and wives, intermingled with Malay and Arabic words. The *peranakan* did not speak Arabic. Only the newcomers, or *totok*, expressed themselves in that language. Thus, already in his early years, Baswedan experienced the contradictions and confrontations that troubled the Hadhrami minority.

By his own account, Baswedan began to oppose the discrimination that existed during his school years. At a social meeting with parents at the Hadramaut school, he openly protested against the preferential treatment given to children of the higher classes, and once even refused to kiss the hand of a well-known *sayyid* who visited the school. Despite these early criticisms, he was proud on his Yemenite origin, and outside of school, he immersed himself in the Arab language and culture. Like all community members of mixed descent, he saw himself as a real Hadhrami. The notion of being an Indonesian, which he was

FIGURE 2 Hadramaut School, Surabaya (1924)
PHOTO COLLECTION KITLV, LEIDEN, SHELF MARK 2975

to embrace later, was still completely absent from his thoughts. Nevertheless, he knew full well that there was a world outside the *kampung Arab*. Despite the predominance of Hadhramis, the population of Ampel consisted of immigrants from different parts of the colony. The nearby harbour was visited by seaman from all over the world. Close by, there was a large Chinese quarter and a European business district. At home, they read *Pewarta Soerabaja*, a Malay-language daily published by the local Chinese that contained reports on the local and national economies, and on world politics. As he and his father were the only ones who could read this language, they often read the news to relatives after evening prayers.

After finishing primary school, Basewedan had to work in the shop although his heart was not in the business. At quiet moments and after closing time, he lost himself in books and articles on various topics. He even followed English and Dutch language courses so that he could read publications in these languages. At the age of sixteen years, shortly before his father's death, he married Syaikun, a fourteen-year-old cousin. She was the daughter of an uncle, from the marriage of a grandfather in Hadhramaut, who had settled in Batavia. Two years later, the first of their nine children was born.

2 Journalist and Politician

Already at the *madrasah*, the diligent Baswedan, who was thirsting for knowledge, started to put his ideas down on paper.[6] Initially, he wrote pamphlets on Islamic subjects, which he handed out to interested persons; but as he grew older, he wanted to reach an ever wider public to make a stand against the conflicts that divided the Hadhrami community. When he was eighteen years old, he began to write for Hadhrami periodicals that were published in Surabaya. His first article appeared in 1926 in *Zaman Baroe* (New Era), the first Malay-language journal in Hadhrami circles that was published by Al-Tahdhibiyyah, a local *peranakan* organization that advocated the awakening of the Hadhramis (Mobini-Kesheh 1996, 242). From 1928 onwards, he contributed to *Lembaga Baroe* (New Institution), the successor to *Zaman Baroe*, which was produced in a printing office he himself had founded. From 1931 onwards, he was a member of the editorial staff of *Al-Jaum*, the organ of the Indo-Arabisch Verbond (IAV, Indo-Arab Union), which under the leadership of al-Amoedi, strove for unity among the divided Hadhramis (Pluvier 1953, 90).[7] At all these periodicals, he worked with Salim Maskati, the first journalist of Hadhrami origin in the Indies, from whom he learned the tricks of the trade and whom he continued to consider his master for the rest of his life. "These [Malay] periodicals," according to Mobini-Kesheh (1996, 243), "shared an Indies-centric outlook which distinguished them from their Arabic language counterpart." His participation in these journals shows that Baswedan had become conscious of the ambiguous position that the *muwallad* or *peranakan* held in the Hadhrami community and in the colonial society at large. He realized that they were no longer Hadhramis, but not yet Indonesians. They occupied an in-between position, between their homeland and their country of settlement; a place they shared with other Indo-groups.[8]

In addition to his work and journalistic activities, the young Baswedan laboured for the Muhammadiyah, the first modernist Indonesian Muslim association (1912). He sat as the only Indo-Hadhrami on the East Javanese wing of its Majelis Tablig (Preaching Council) which, under the command of K.H. Mas

6 For his early journalistic and political career, listen to Interview Makarim, cassette I, side B, and cassette II, side A. Cf. Soebagio 1981, 256–258; Tashadi and Poliman 1980/1981, 64–66; Suratmin 1989, passim.

7 A lot of information on the IAV and Baswedan's relationship with al-Amoedi can be found in Interview Makarim, cassette IV, side B.

8 He also wrote for the Arabic-language periodical *Al-Misjkah* (The Lamp), which the IAV published for *totok*.

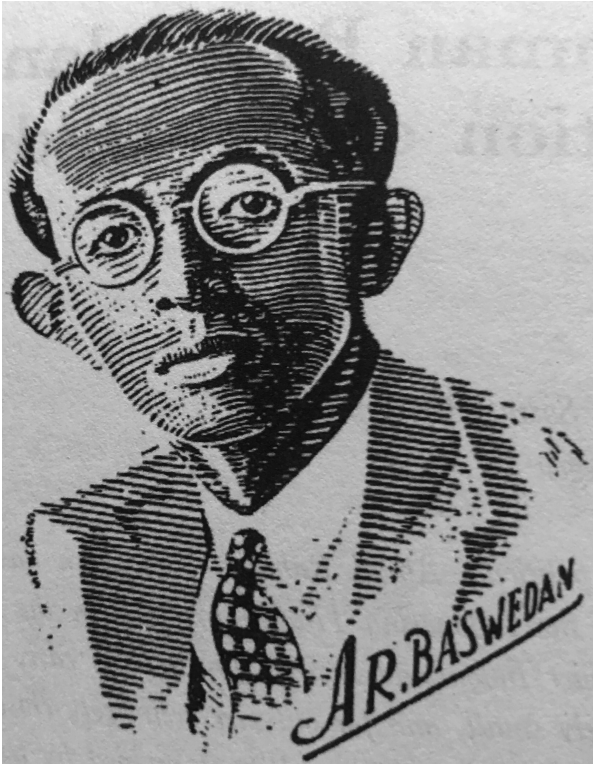

FIGURE 3
Portrait of Abdul Rahman Baswedan (1939)

Mansoer (later chairman of Muhammadiyah), preached about true Islam. He was also a member of the Jong Islamieten Bond (JIB) founded in 1925, the most important youth organization based on Islamic principles. Among the activities he undertook for the JIB was lecturing at women's branches; initially, this was done with a lowered gaze as he was not used to addressing women. His activities outside the Hadhrami communities acquainted him with members of other population groups and the opinions that were prevalent among them. More than once, he noticed that the Arabs, as the Hadhramis were commonly called, were seen as outsiders who were rarely spoken about in positive terms. The image of the typical Hadhrami was that of a usurer, a miser, and a swindler. He felt an urgent need to correct such stereotypes.

In 1930, the family enterprise went bankrupt. Deprived of an income, the twenty-two-year-old Baswedan and his family moved in with his parents-in-law, who had by then settled in Kudus. To earn a living, he became a salesman for his father-in-law, who owned a small cigarette factory. Although he did not like the job, he felt very much at home in Kudus. The town was a stronghold of Islamic modernism and he kept in close touch with followers

of the Muhammadiyah and Al-Irsyad. This soon put his relationship with his family under strain since his father-in-law was averse to this urge for innovation.

During a business trip to Surabaya in 1932, Baswedan was invited by Liem Koen Hian, the editor-in-chief of the newspaper *Sin Tit Po*, to become a member of the editorial staff—an offer he seized with both hands. *Sin Tit Po* was the antithesis of *Sin Po*, the voice of the Indonesian Chinese who backed Chinese nationalism and favoured Chiang Kai-shek. The Malay-language *Sin Tit Po* supported Indonesian nationalism, and was moderately socialist. Although the paper initially defended only Indo-Chinese interests, it gradually stood up for all population groups that had turned against Dutch colonial rule. According to Liem, the loyalty of the inhabitants of the archipelago, Chinese and Arabs included, should lie with Indonesia. For this reason he fought for an "equal status for all groups and support for the national struggle for independence" (Poeze 1988, III, lx). In May 1932, Liem joined in the preparations for the foundation of the Persatuan Perkumpulan-Perkumpulan Bangsa Asia (Union of Associations of Asians). The time, however, was not yet ripe for a political movement comprising various population groups. Out of necessity, he restricted his political activities to the Indo-Chinese and founded, that same year, the Partai Tionghoa Indonesia (PTI) (Pluvier 1953, 89–90; Poeze 1988, III, lix). Among the editorial staff members were Tjoa Tjie Liang, the secretary of the PTI, and Syaranamual, a nationalist of Moluccan origin who played an important role in the Sarekat Ambon, and who was vice-chairman of the Surabaya branch of the Persatuan Bangsa Indonesia (Union of Indonesians) founded by Dr. Soetomo.

Without doubt, Liem's political views and those of the other staff members gave Baswedan food for thought about the relationship between the *totok* and the *peranakan* in the Hadhrami minority, and about the relationship between Hadhramis and the Indonesian population at large. More than ever, he realized that Hadhramis born in the Indies were closer to the Indonesians than to the inhabitants of southern Yemen. In debates in Hadhrami circles, however, this topic was never addressed. People were either not aware of it, or it was simply too controversial.

At the end of 1932, all the staff of *Sin Tit Po* stepped down after their major advertisers, Dutch enterprises such as Internatio and Borsumij, refused to advertise in a paper that had become more and more nationalistic; in other words, anti-colonial. Within a few months, he found a new job, again in Surabaya. Together with a few former colleagues, he joined the staff of *Soeara Oemoem* (Voice of the Public), of which Dr. Soetomo was the director. Baswedan now wrote for an Indonesian newspaper, which at that time was exceptional. During his work, he met several nationalist leaders, such as Tjokroaminoto and Haji

Agus Salim of the Partai Sarekat Islam Indonesia, who contributed even more to his political consciousness. In *Soeara Oemoem*, he reacted to the speeches they and other leaders gave and to the articles they wrote. He began writing increasingly about international political developments, in particular in the Middle East, which he kept up with through a number of Arab newspapers. The news from Arab countries strengthened his opinion that Islamization and nationalism were not contradictory as some nationalists, including Sukarno, believed.

In 1934, to be closer to his wife and children who still lived in Kudus, he switched to the new bi-weekly *Matahari*, which was published in Semarang by the Oei Tjeng Han concern (Poeze 1988, III: 388). The paper was led by the former *Sin Po* journalist Kwee Hing Tjiat, who after a spell in Shanghai as a correspondent for the pro-China journal *Perniagaan*, had come to the conclusion that the Indo-Chinese, in contrast to what he had first thought, had nothing to look for in their country of origin. The editors advocated close cooperation between Indo-groups and Indonesians, a viewpoint that Baswedan endorsed with heart and soul.

3 *Totok* and *Peranakan*

On 1 August 1934, in the first issue of *Matahari*, Baswedan published his famous article on the difficult relationship between the *totok* and the *peranakan*, which in his opinion was largely responsible for the discord within the Hadhrami community.[9] The article starts with two anecdotes. The first is about the owner of a *warung kopi*, a coffee stall, and a customer who strike up a conversation. In polite Javanese, they talk about this and that, and after a while, the customer, just to be friendly, asks the owner where he originally comes from. It turns out that the owner is a Hadhrami, and the customer answers that he too belongs to this group. Given their predominantly Javanese appearance and their fluency in the local language, they initially did not realize that they were both Indo-Hadhramis. In an Indonesian setting, this common background was apparently of no importance.

The second anecdote concerns an incident that Baswedan had himself experienced a few months earlier when he lodged at the house of a friend of the JIB in Malang. During this stay, he and his host family were photographed in tra-

9 To emphasize his orientation towards Indonesia Baswedan preferred to use the Malay terms *peranakan* and *totok* instead of the Arabic words *muwallad* and *wulaiti*.

ditional Javanese dress in front of the house. While he was standing there in a sarong, a striped jacket, and a folded head cloth, a passing acquaintance, a *totok*, glanced at him suspiciously. The face of the "Javanese" looked familiar, but he did not recognize him. It never entered his mind that a Hadhrami could dress like that. Baswedan, for his part, declined to make himself known. Although he felt at ease among the Javanese, he was ashamed to be so dressed in front of members of his own group. Both these commonplace anecdotes, succinctly reproduced here, say something about the relationships among Hadhramis, and those between Hadhramis and indigenous Indonesians. They show how close the *peranakan* were to the Indonesians, and how far removed the *totok* were from the local population. The second occurrence also illustrates the complex relationship between the *totok* and the *peranakan*.

Pondering these incidents, Baswedan subsequently wondered:

> whether his feeling of being a Hadhrami and not a 'Javanese Indonesian' was not the result of transmitted knowledge instead of the inner reality that is formed by the water of the country I drink from birth and by the air I inhale everyday.
>
> BASWEDAN [1934] 1940, 9[10]

To put it in another way, is the Hadhrami identity of the *peranakan* not determined more by ideals than by the facts, by what people want to hear instead of what they observe and experience? He thought it was time to recognize that a large gap existed between the *totok* and the *peranakan*, and to acknowledge that they looked down upon, ridiculed, and even hated each other. He attributed the gap to differences in psychological and sociological characteristics between the two groups. Those born in Hadhramaut had grown up in a poor environment in which violence between tribes and families was the order of the day, and where civility and refinement were virtually unheard of. They were brought up to be *orang berani* or daredevils, to whom fear was a stranger. As Baswedan writes: "In jest, in games, and in reality qualities of masculinity had to be demonstrated constantly" and "A rifle shot is not something that turns a *totok*'s hair" (Baswedan [1934] 1940, 10).[11] Life in Hadhramaut was hard and "primitive," and in response, its inhabitants were tough, rude, thrifty, and resolute—characteristics *totok* continued to display in the new environments in which they settled. *Totok* also looked a long way

10 The article "Peranakan dan totoknya" was several times reprinted, for example in *Insaf* (1940) 4 (2/3): 8–12, to which I refer here.

11 Originally published in *Matahari* in 1934.

ahead. Against their better judgement, they clung stubbornly to the ideal of returning to Hadhramaut. In order to be able to live in their homeland, in relative prosperity amidst their children and grandchildren, they saved every penny.

How different the situation was for the *peranakan* in pre-war Indonesia, where population groups, tribes, and families generally lived side-by-side in relative peace. Masculinity, toughness, and fearlessness were not exactly qualities demanded by the natural and social environment, so they were not passed on by Indonesian or Indo-Hadhrami mothers to their sons. "From their earliest childhood" writes Baswedan:

> they tasted more often the sweetness of honey than the bitterness of *cadam* [a medicine], more often experienced soft rather than hard things [...]. Since childhood their mothers have always given them plenty of possibilities to sigh, when they felt down they were cheered up, they were offered food before they were hungry, and the availability of all kinds of food and drinks, right and left, inside and outside the house [...] ensured that they were not daunted by the thought of making a living in this world.
>
> BASWEDAN [1934] 1940, 11[12]

Indeed, it was not that difficult to make a living in the colony. In comparison with Hadhramaut, the Indies provided literally "enough water to quench thirst and enough food not to starve to death." There was no imperative for frugality, excessive assiduity, or avarice. Baswedan found the *peranakan*, generally speaking, easy-going and light-hearted. They tried to combine business with pleasure. They did not worry about tomorrow, but espoused a *carpe diem* mentality. For the majority, returning to Hadhramaut was a non-issue; they were born and bred in the Indies, and also expected to die there.

The way the Indo-Hadhramis behaved, dressed, amused themselves, ate, and lived, was a thorn in the *totok*'s flesh. It devalued the way of life they were familiar with in the southern Arabian peninsula. It also made the men less masculine. Baswedan thought that the intolerance and inflexibility of the *totok* was the result of an absence of violence in their new environment. It made them eager to prove their toughness and courage in other facets of society. The *peranakans*, in their turn, were annoyed by the loudness and rudeness of the *totok*, and cursed their habit of reproaching them for what they saw as deviations and weaknesses. Instead of standing up for themselves, however, they gave in

12 Ibid.

and suffered in silence. The time was ripe, concluded the twenty-six-year-old Baswedan, to cast off the yoke, that is, to break the domination of the *totok*. Baswedan's message, written in simple but telling words that drew on daily occurrences and stereotypes, was clear: the Indo-Hadhramis had more affinity with Indonesians than with the Hadhramis of their homeland, and it was time to accept this and to act appropriately. Moreover, he argued, the acceptance of being Indonesian would make solutions to other internal problems easier, since most of the difficulties were linked to this difference in "national" orientation.

His article came as a bombshell, and led to a new wave of consternation among the minority. Baswedan had written something that was thought about here and there, but about which the majority had been silent or even unaware. Almost *en masse*, the *totok* spoke out against the purport of the article and raised a hue and cry; while the *peranakan*, albeit hesitantly, recognized themselves in the description. For the time being, it created more confusion than clarity.[13]

4 Persatoean Arab Indonesia

Baswedan followed up through the repercussions. Immediately after publication of the article, he visited the most important Hadhrami communities in Java to try to persuade prominent members of all layers of the population to participate in a conference that had to lead to the foundation of a movement for *peranakan* (Suratmin 1989, 57–58).[14] Almost all the existing Hadhrami associations looked after the interests of a specific class—Rabithah Alawiyah for the *sayyid*, al-Kathiri for the *qabili*, Al-Irsyad for the *syekh*—while the IAV of al-Amoedi, a federation of organizations always at odds with one another, had lost all credibility. Moreover, within all these organizations, the conservative *totok* had a disproportionate influence and blocked any initiative which displeased them. A distinct, widely supported movement for *peranakan* was, Baswedan argued, the only way to overcome the impasse.

Although he was received with suspicion, scepticism, and sometimes hostility wherever he went—quite apart from the opinion he was considered too young and too poor to achieve anything in Hadhrami circles—after ongoing deliberations, he succeeded in arousing the interest of about forty well-

13 Interview Makarim, cassette VII, side A.

14 Cf. Interview Makarim, cassette VII, side A.

known *peranakan* from different classes for his plan. From 4–6 October 1934, the participants, mainly of the younger generation, met in the house of Said Bahilul in Kampung Melayu, Semarang. Among them were entrepreneurs, traders, formal and informal leaders, journalists, and both rich and poor. The representatives of the *peranakan* of Batavia included Hasan Argoebi, *kapten* of the Arabs, a member of the central board of Al-Irsyad and son-in-law of the well-known businessman, Oemar Mangoes, and Muhammad Abu Bakar Alatas, son of the chairman of Rabithah Alawiyah and one of the largest real estate owners in the Kwitang area. He was one of three participants who, as a sign of his status, carried a pistol. The delegate from the city of Solo was Ahmad Bahaswan, one of the founders of the first Hollandsch-Arabische School. From Semarang, two notorious followers of Rabithah Alawiyah were present—Idrus Al Jufri, *kapten* of the Arabs, and Nuh Alkaff of the weekly *Pewarta*. Pekalongan was represented by the journalist Husein Al Kadri from the Arabic-language monthly *Al-Shifa'* (The Remedy). Also, Baswedan's mentor from Surabaya, the ten years older Salim Maskati attended the conference (Suratmin 1989, 64).[15]

Against all expectations, the participants succeeded in coming to terms with one another, not least because of the meticulous preparations and Baswedan's outstanding tact. To prevent problems with terms of address—the *syekh* refused to use the title *sayyid*—at the first meeting it was decided to address each other as *saudara* (brother). The acceptance of this alternative, proposed by Baswedan but defended with great dedication by the *sayyid* Nuh Alkaff, the chairman on the first day, can be seen as an enormous concession by the *sayyid* delegation. Without this agreement, the conference would have been doomed to failure.[16] On 5 October, Baswedan accomplished his masterpiece. Without anyone walking out and without one negative vote, he won the approval of the participants for the foundation of the Persatoean Arab Indonesia (PAI), the Union of Indonesian Arabs, which saw as its main goals the promotion of the emancipation of the Hadhramis and their integration into the society at large. In the footsteps of the Indische Partij, the party of the Indo-Europeans, and the Partai Tionghoa Indonesia (PTI), the party of the Indo-Chinese, the founders acknowledged that it was not Hadhramaut, the land of their ancestors, but rather Indonesia that was their fatherland; and that the Indonesian culture was their culture insofar as it was not opposed to Islam. With regard to the future, the union had the same ideals as the Indonesian nationalists.

15 Interview Makarim, cassette IX, side A and B.
16 Interview Makarim, cassette VII, side B.

To fulfil their duties to Indonesian society, the Hadhramis felt it was imperative "to improve their position in the social, economic and political fields" and to "awaken feelings of brotherhood and equality, coupled with mutual respect and appreciation, and the removal of everything that could damage such sentiments" (Pluvier 1953, 91).[17]

On the final day of the conference, an organizational structure was set up and a central board was chosen (Suratmin 1989, 65). It was the intention to establish branches all over the country to spread and realize the ideals of the movement. Every Hadhrami was eligible to become a member, but only the *peranakan* had voting rights. Baswedan—the general opinion was that he was the most suitable candidate—became chairman of the union, Nuh Alkaff and Maskati became secretaries, and Segaf Alsegaf was made treasurer. The reactions to the foundation were divided. The majority of the *totok* again felt seriously offended and reacted dismissively. A minority of the *peranakan* was enthusiastic, others were against it, but the majority preferred to adopt a wait-and-see attitude. They did not dare to support the association openly for fear of insulting their *totok* fathers or relatives, or of being fired by their *totok* employers. The opponents often considered themselves superior to the Indonesians, or were afraid that identification with them might have undesirable legal consequences.[18]

Baswedan saw it as his personal mission to win over the sceptics. In 1934 and 1935, he travelled throughout the country to explain the points of view of the PAI. In some places, he sometimes had to stay as long as one to two months to persuade and to help potential adherents set up a branch. Here and there, opposition by the *totok* was so strong that he could not walk along the streets unprotected. Nevertheless, between 1937 and 1940, the number of branches rose from twenty-eight to forty-five. In almost every significant Hadhrami community in Java and the Outer Islands, after a hesitant start, the PAI had become an important factor in a matter of a few years.

During all these years, Baswedan was the main face of the PAI. With all the means at his disposal, he devoted his time and energy to the association. He gave up his job as a journalist with a regular income at *Matahari*, resulting in his large family living in impoverished circumstances. For fear of compromising himself, he refused financial support from the PAI. He was both policy-maker and spokesman, and a general factotum. No detail escaped his eye. He wrote

17 Interview Makarim, cassette VII, side A. Since then, 5 October has been called Hari Sumpah Pemuda Indonesia Keturunan Arab, the Day of the Vow of Allegiance of the Indo-Arab Youth. See Baswedan 1974.

18 Interview Makarim, cassette VII, side B.

the text for a PAI marching song and designed a logo for the *Persatoean* that consisted of Indonesian (a palm tree and a volcano) and Islamic (a crescent) emblems.[19]

Initially, the PAI was only active in the social, religious, and cultural fields. The association did its best to improve education for Hadhrami children, and organized courses and lectures for adults on worldly and spiritual subjects. To reach young people and women, a youth organization, Lasjkar PAI, and a women's association, PAI Istri, were set up. The efforts to emancipate women can be seen as a revolutionary move in the Hadhrami community. The PAI also published three periodicals, *Insaf* (Realization), *Sadar* (Conscious), and *Aliran Baroe* (New Direction). The first and third, under the direction of Hoesin Bafagih, was based in Surabaya; the second, with Baswedan as its head, was distributed from the places where he happened to be staying. Both men also wrote stage plays in which they denounced abuse and propagated ideals.[20] For example, they opposed the existing usurious practices that gave the Hadhramis a bad reputation among Indonesians, and discrimination against women. Each year, a congress was held in which the state of affairs was discussed and a new central board was chosen.

Beginning in 1936, the association also began to make itself felt in the political field. It supported the so-called Petition Soetardjo that was introduced in the *volksraad*, the pseudo-parliament, seeking a conference of Dutch and Indonesian representatives to map out a road to autonomy within the framework of the Kingdom of the Netherlands. In 1939, the *Persatoean* became a member of the Majelis Islam A'la Indonesia (MIAI), the Indonesian High Islamic Council; in the same year, it sided with the action of the Gaboengan Politik Indonesia (GAPI), an alliance of Indonesian political parties, to replace the *volksraad* with a democratically elected parliament. In 1940, the PAI, now a party instead of an association, became an extraordinary member of the GAPI. Ordinary membership was not possible at that time since the Indonesian parties wanted to prevent the parties of other foreign minority groups from joining. Of all the Indo-parties, none were closer to the Indonesian population than the PAI. The Indonesian parties and the nationalist press greeted it as an ally (Pluvier 1953, 140–141, 146; Algadri 1994, 122–127).

19 Interview Makarim, cassette VII, side B; Suratmin 1989, 69–75.

20 Bafagih wrote *Fatimah* and Baswedan, amongst others, *Menuju Masyarakat Baru*.

5 The Japanese Occupation

The Japanese Occupation in March 1942 meant the end of political parties and a halt to political life. "Any discussion or organization [...] concerned with the political administration of the country" was forbidden by the Gunseikanbu, the Military Administrator's Department (cited in Benda 1958, 11). Only "social, sportive and cultural meetings were allowed, subject to prior registration" (Benda 1958, 23). For the Indo-groups, this was just one of a number of setbacks. Against all expectations, the Indo-Chinese, the Indo-Europeans, and the Indo-Arabs were regarded as foreigners. Men, women, and children had to register themselves as such, and were obliged to seek permission for each journey or to relocate. Schools for children of foreign minorities were closed (De Jong 1985, 911). The Japanese regarded the Hadhramis with distrust. Just like the Dutch, they were petrified by fears of Pan-Islamic activities, and for this reason, they forbade the use of Arabic, both oral and written, for a time (Benda 1958, 125–126).

Indignant at these discriminatory measures, Baswedan secretly called on his fellow party members to ignore the summons to register as outsiders.[21] Had the PAI in recent years not fought for equal rights for Indonesians and *peranakan*? Should it not be expected that the Japanese, who claimed to revile the Dutch colonial regime, should give them that status? His call did not remain secret, witnessed by the fact that he was arrested by the Kempeitai in Solo, his place of residence at the time. Thanks to the intervention of Mr. Singgih, a former leader of the erstwhile Partai Indonesia Raya (Parindra), who apparently worked for the Japanese, he was soon set free. Singgih, a former acquaintance, pointed out Baswedan's merits, in terms of the nationalist movement, to the Japanese military police.

A few weeks later, he and other prominent figures attended a meeting in Solo with Sukarno, who had returned from Dutch captivity in Bengkulu. The meeting was organized by the Japanese, without doubt to assure themselves of the support of popular leaders. During the deliberations, Sukarno showed himself to be well informed about developments in the Hadhrami community. During his internment, he had read the PAI journals regularly. He advised Basewedan to move to Jakarta where he could achieve more for the Hadhrami cause.

Baswedan heeded his advice and took up residence in the house of a rich PAI member. To earn a living, amongst other jobs, he sold second-hand clothes that

21 For Baswedan's activities during the Japanese occupation, listen to Interview Makarim, cassette XI, side A. Cf. Soebagio 1981, 259–260; Suratmin 1989, 97–102. See also chapter VI of this book.

he bought from Indo-Europeans through an intermediary (Suratmin 1989, 100). In Jakarta, he had frequent contact with nationalist leaders such as Sukarno, who, to achieve their own goal of an independent Indonesia, cooperated with the Japanese. He was also in touch with those who tried to reach the same outcome by refusing to cooperate, such as Sjahrir.

Although in principle, Baswedan did not want to have anything to do with the Japanese regime, he was enticed by Sukarno *cum suis* and members of the Hadhrami community to adopt a more cooperative attitude. It seemed to be the only way to further the interests of his compatriots. At the beginning of 1943, he seemed to be over cooperative. In a journal of the yet to be forbidden MIAI, he wrote about the relationship between Shinto and Islam: "We have to search for points in our religion which coincide with the essence of Nipponese culture, so that we can find a compass to guide us in the fulfilment of the government's hopes" (Benda 1958, 240n3). This was presumably a statement he regretted later, as he never again referred to it.

In September 1944, Baswedan was appointed a representative of the Hadhramis in the Chuo Sangiin, Central Advisory Council, which had been founded a year before to advise the Gunseikanbu, the Military Administrator's Department, on improving their relationship with the population and "upgrading of the cultural standard of the population, the education, the economy, the social welfare and public health" (De Jong 1985, 905). Initially, the body consisted of forty-five members, twenty-three of whom were appointed by the military government, two who were delegated by the sultans of Solo and Yogyakarta, and eighteen chosen by advisory bodies at the residency level. When Baswedan was inaugurated, the number of appointed members was increased by five, including for the first time an Indo-Hadhrami and an Indo-European (the Chinese had had five representatives from the start). The body did not meet more than eight or nine times in total, and the Japanese did not take the recommendations seriously. They were prepared to grant concessions only when defeat was approaching.

As a matter of fact, since December 1943, the Indo-Hadhramis and Indo-Chinese had again been allowed to travel around without a permit. In July 1944, surprisingly, the Indo-Hadhramis were no longer classified as foreigners (in contrast to the *peranakan* of other population groups) (Benda 1958, 244n30; De Jong 1985, 912). They came to have the same status as the Indonesians. As far as is known, Baswedan and the other representatives took no active part in this decision. It seems that both the appointment of more representatives of immigrant minorities, and the abolition of the restrictive measures should be seen as efforts to make a favourable impression on the population groups involved.

Together with a few other prominent Hadhrami, Baswedan was also selected for the Djawa Hokokai, Java Service Association in 1944. The Hokokai was the third attempt by the Japanese, after the Gerakan Tiga A (Triple A Movement) and Poesat Tenaga Rakyat (Poetera; Center of the People's Power) to enthuse the Indonesian population about the Great East Asian Co-prosperity Sphere, and to stimulate them to support and contribute to the Asian war.[22] The first two propaganda organizations were only accessible to indigenous Indonesians, but members of the Indo-communities were also welcome in the Hokokai. Baswedan occupied himself with the organization of courses on topics such as the history of nationalism. Just like other nationalist leaders, he used the propaganda machinery primarily to sensitize and prepare the Hadhramis for Indonesian independence. The courses were very successful and attracted between five hundred and thousand people.

In May 1945, Baswedan was appointed a member of the Badan Penyelidik Usaha-usaha Persiapan Kemerdekaan (BPUPK), the Research Commission for the Preparation of Independence. In this commission, he expressed his worries about the future legal position of the Indo-Hadhramis, as the Indonesian population at large was not familiar with the changes that had taken place within this minority group in the past ten years. Apparently, he feared that his people would once again be categorized as second-rate citizens. He argued that they were often "more Indonesian than the Indonesians themselves" and that "there are no *peranakan* at all who want any other citizenship than Indonesian citizenship" (Suratmin 1989, 199–202; De Jong 1985, 996). Paradoxically, the war years had contributed greatly to the awareness by the Indo-Hadhramis that they belonged to Indonesia.

6 Independence

Following the Japanese defeat, the majority of the Indo-Hadhramis took the side of the Republik Indonesia that was proclaimed on 17 August 1945, although a small minority headed by al-Amoedi, the former chairman of the pre-war IAV, declared itself in favour of a temporary return to Dutch administration.[23] While

22 The A's of the Triple A, the first propaganda movement, stood for "Japan the Leader of Asia, Japan the Protector of Asia, and Japan the Light of Asia" (Kahin 1952, 103). The Poetera was the second propaganda organization. Both failed in mobilizing Indonesians for Japanese imperialist plans.

23 The Indo-Arabisch Verbond did not find the time ripe for independence due to the lack of national unity and the vulnerability of the Indo-groups. It feared the Indonesian extremists, and asked the Allied forces to take a firm stand against them.

Indo-Hadhrami leaders participated in Republican organizations, young men in various places in the country joined local resistance groups to fight against the Dutch, who refused to recognize independence.[24] Together with one, and later, two, fellow *peranakan*, Baswedan became a member of the Komite Nasional Indonesia Pusat (KNIP; Central Indonesian National Committee) that was installed by Sukarno on 19 August. The committee consisted of "outstanding Indonesian nationalists and the most important leaders of the chief ethnic, religious, social, and economic groups in Indonesia" (Kahin 1952, 140). Initially, it was only an advisory body but after only a few months, it was transformed into a provisional parliament that shared full legislative powers with the president.

A year later, Baswedan became deputy minister of information under Mohammad Natsir in the Third Sjahrir Cabinet that was in power from October 1946 to July 1947 (Kahin 1952, 193–195). Natsir was one of the leaders of Masjumi, the Madjelis Sjuro Muslimin Indonesia or Consultative Council of Indonesian Muslims, that was founded in November 1945 and, which in the years that followed, was more popular than the Partai Nasional Indonesia (PNI). Baswedan officially represented in the cabinet the Hadhrami minority. The interests of the other two Indo-minorities were promoted in a similar way, in their case by a Minister of State. Baswedan was responsible for disseminating information on government policies to the population, and for passing on to the government the concerns of the people. According to Suratmin (1989, 107), he often mingled with the audience at public speeches by Sukarno to sound out their reactions. As deputy minister, he was a member of the delegation led by Vice-President Haji Agus Salim to Cairo to negotiate the recognition of the Republic by the Arab League. On 10 June 1947, Egypt was the first country to establish diplomatic relations with the Indonesian Republic. Baswedan was immediately sent home to inform the President of this breakthrough, but because of an air blockade by Dutch troops, he had to wait a month in Singapore before he could personally give the news and documents involved to Minister President Amir Sjarifoeddin. The Third Cabinet of Sjahrir had fallen in the meantime.[25]

Although Baswedan knew that he owed his election to these roles, above all to the fact that he was an Indo-Hadhrami leader, he saw himself as an independent politician. He believed that the legal equalization of his fellow Hadhramis with the Indonesians was only a question of time and would be

24 Interview Makarim, cassette XIII, side A.

25 Interview Makarim, cassette XIV, side A and B. Cf. Suratmin 1989, 108–118.

regulated in a new constitution after the troubles with the Dutch were over. As he was convinced that the great majority of them would opt for Indonesia, he repeatedly declared himself in favour of a passive rather than active option system, through which all Indo-Hadhramis would automatically be awarded Indonesian citizenship, but which individuals could decline if they so wished.[26]

Disappointment was bitter, therefore, when, after Dutch recognition of an independent Indonesia at the end of 1949, little changed. The Japanese decision to grant equal rights to Indo-Hadhramis was ignored, and they were again treated as a separate population group. Although they were not classified as "Foreign Orientals," and were legally not subject to as much discrimination as in colonial times, constitutionally, their position resembled that of the pre-war period. Together with the Indo-Chinese and Indo-Europeans, they were categorized as *golongan kecil* (small groups) or *minoritas*. Members of these groups would indeed become Indonesian citizens if they did not repudiate this status before 27 December 1951, but only with the addition of the words *bukan asli*, "not indigenous" (Baswedan 1951).[27] Through this, they again fell between two stools: they were neither foreigners and outsiders, *orang asing*; nor were they insiders or *orang asli*. The Hadhrami leaders and their followers felt deceived as never before after the years in which they had identified themselves with Indonesia. In 1947, Sukarno wrote in a message to the Indo-Hadhramis:

> Indonesian brothers and sisters of Arab descent, I understand your soul and know about your efforts as children of Indonesia. You love me as a father, I love you as my children, like I love every son and daughter of Indonesia.[28]

This statement from the President seemed like a crystal clear acceptance of the Indo-Hadhramis as Indonesians. Fine words indeed, but it turned out to be very difficult to convert those words into deeds. It seemed that the government preferred to treat the various Indo-groups juridically in one and the same manner and, therefore, dithered about creating a special position for the Hadhramis.

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26 Interview Makarim, casette XVII, side B.

27 The November edition of the bi-weekly *Nusaputra* in 1951 (1–3/4) was completely devoted to the repudiation issue.

28 *Amanat* (Message) President Soekarno, 29 March 1947. Printed on the cover of *Nusaputra* 1951 (1) 3/4.

Although an overwhelming majority opted for Indonesian citizenship—according to Algadri (1994, 134), only a handful declined the option—they felt deeply offended by the second-rate status they were awarded. The sour legacy of this classification was that they again experienced all kinds of difficulties in practising their professions. For example, they were not eligible for the financial support that was available to indigenous entrepreneurs, were not allowed to become members of cooperatives, and could not buy land. Traders who tried to go abroad to renew pre-war business contacts were only given visas after undergoing lengthy procedures, and then had the greatest difficulties in re-entering the country. In terms of career prospects, there was discrimination against civil servants of Hadhrami origin, who had to take a back seat to those who were "real" Indonesians. What the Hadhramis regretted most, however, was that both the authorities and the population continued to see and treat them as outsiders. Essentially, they felt Indonesians but were not accepted as such.

Baswedan did not take this lying down. In 1951, he launched a bi-weekly with the unequivocal title *Nusaputra*, that is, Children of the Fatherland.[29] The aim of the periodical was to inform Indo-communities, authorities, intellectuals, and the outside world about the history and position of the minorities in Indonesia and, eventually, end discrimination against these groups. Among the contributors to the journal were politicians, officials, and journalists from various ethnic groups and of different political leanings. Both national politicians, such as Hatta, Sjahrir, Mohammad Natsir, and Ki Hadjar Dewantara, and leaders and journalists of Indo-groups, such as Tjoa Tjie Liang—with whom he had worked together at *Matahari*—and J.P. Snell of the Eurasian Partai Indo Nasional (PIN), wrote articles about the minority problem and on the necessity of striving for the constitutional and real integration of the minorities. Barkah, Baswedan's second wife (his first had died in 1947) wrote a column as Bu Bas for female readers in which she regularly appealed to national women's organizations to speak up for the rights of the women and children of minority groups. Although other minorities were not forgotten, from the start, the journal spoke particularly for the Hadhramis. That same year, to work toward wiping out the differences in treatment, other prominent members of the Hadhrami community, including Hamid Algadri and Hoesin Bafagih, founded the Badan Konperensi Bangsa Indonesia Keturunan Arab, the Conference for Indonesians of Arab Origin, in Malang (Algadri 1994, 135). At the local level,

29 See *Nusaputra* 1951, vol. I; 1952, vol. II.

Hadhramis also joined forces to exact changes in the way they were treated. Once again, they had to organize themselves against their will on an ethnic basis to achieve the opposite—the denial of a separate position.

To achieve the goal of equal status with the Indonesians, different and sometimes contradictory arguments were repeatedly put forward in the pages of *Nusaputra*. One emphasized that although the Hadhramis were indeed of foreign origin, of all the foreign groups, they were the closest to the original population. To a certain extent, they shared a common history, a common religion, and a common culture, and they had close family relationships with local population groups all over the country. For this reason, Hadhramis should have the right to the status of an *asli* or indigenous population group, analogous to that of the Javanese, the Minangkabau, and the Ambonese. The fact that they were not fully integrated was the legacy of the colonial policy that had aimed to isolate the Hadhrami inhabitants for fear of subversive ideas. They also pointed out to the government that it had repeatedly declared that it was pursuing the policy of a homogenous nation, a nation in which there was no place for inequality on the basis of either race or descent. In its actions, despite such protestations, it was continuing the detested colonial division. The Hadhramis no longer wanted to be a *merk sendiri*, a separate brand; instead they wanted to be assimilated to a much greater degree.[30] For this very reason, Baswedan and his supporters had refused to revive the Partai Arab Indonesia after independence, and had encouraged their followers to choose an Indonesian political party instead. The Hadhramis had become members and followers of parties of different colours; they were to be found in the Islamic, nationalistic, socialist, and communist-oriented parties. Their choices were no longer any different from those of the average Indonesian (Algadri 1994, 136).[31]

Another argument that was often raised was that, in contrast to the Indo-Chinese and Indo-Europeans who had constitutional relationships with China and the Netherlands, the Hadhramis had no comparable home nation. Hadhramaut was a region, not a political entity or state. Power in Hadhramaut was divided among different groups and persons. Between 1904—when Great Britain took possession of Southern Arabia through a diplomatic agreement with Turkey—and 1967—the birth of the People's Republic of South Yemen—the

30 Cf. "Ringkasan prae advies Sdr. Hamid Algadri jang diuraikan dalam konperensi Warga Negara turunan Arab di Malang tanggal 24, 25, 26 Desember 1950" as well as "Pemandangan umum pada konferensi Warga Negara Indonesia turunan Arab di Malang" by A. Baraba (unpublished documents).

31 Interview Makarim, cassette XVIII, sides A and B.

inhabitants were British subjects, but not British citizens. As the British only exerted a nominal influence in the remote wadis of Hadhramaut, there was no special bond or affinity with the British Empire. While the Europeans and Chinese could in principle make a choice, the Hadhramis could not. It was common knowledge that many members of the other Indo-communities found it difficult to make a choice. Among the Indo-Hadhramis, however, there were few doubts at all; almost everybody had no doubt about their loyalty to Indonesia. It would be a disgrace, in their opinion, if they were not rewarded and were instead lumped together with the other groups of foreign origin.[32]

Basewedan and the other writers in *Nusaputra* also drew attention to the fact that most *peranakan* were in reduced circumstances, and indeed suffering poverty in the post-war years. If they wanted to begin an enterprise and improve their situation, however, they were, as were all "non-original" Indonesians, subjected to cumbersome and costly regulations. In general, they were not well-to-do, although they were constantly seen as such. Apparently, the former economic success of the *totok* was reflected upon them. Further, this group lost out economically due to the war. Classification as pure Indonesian would have been beneficial to their economic position.

To reinforce their arguments, most Hadhrami politicians refused to run as "Hadhramis" for the three seats that were reserved for the Hadhrami minority in the first national elections in 1955; the same number of seats as allotted to the Indo-Europeans, and half the number available for the Indo-Chinese. They wanted to participate in the election as "Indonesian" candidates for Indonesian parties. By sticking to their guns, they eventually had their number of seats doubled in parliament, which in their eyes proved that the Hadhramis had the right to be counted among the majority (Algadri 1994, 136). Before the war, members of minority groups were not admitted to Indonesian parties, although it came to pass that one or more Indo-Hadhramis could be found on every list of candidates. Baswedan, who had become a member of the House of Representatives after the dissolution of the KNIP in 1950, ran for the Islamic Masjumi at the first elections in 1955, to the astonishment of many. As a convinced nationalist, he chose to underline this party, as he had made clear at the start of his career that Islam and nationalism go well together; he also wanted to reinforce the party's nationalistic orientation. Islam, which emphatically preaches love of the fatherland, had always been a standard in making his choices. An accompanying argument was that he was impressed by the devo-

32 See, for example, *Nusaputra* 1951, 1 (3/4), 33–36. Cf. Interview Makarim, cassette IX, side B, cassette X, side A.

tion and unselfishness of the leaders of this party, such as Mohammad Natsir, Prawoto Mangkusasmito, and Mohamad Roem. These were men of principle who were conscientious, honest, and cultured, and who fulfilled their religious duties and lived sober lives—qualities he often found lacking in the leadership of other parties.[33]

In addition to his membership of the first democratically chosen Parliament of Indonesia, Baswedan was also elected to the Badan Konstituante or Constituent Assembly, set up to adapt the temporary constitution of 1950 following Indonesia's transition from a federal state to a unitarian one at the beginning of 1951. Although he did not forget the interests of the minority to which he belonged, in his representative functions he stood up for what was, in his opinion, good for all Indonesians. He vehemently fought the ideas of the Partai Komunis Indonesia (PKI) and worked hard for the modernization of the Islamic legacy. As a counterbalance to the left-oriented Lembaga Kebudayaan Rakyat (LEKRA), the Institute for People's Culture, he founded the Badan Peminat Sastra Islam, the Body of Devotees to Islamic Literature, and issued the periodical *Al-Misjkah*. As in the pre-war years, he continued to participate as a journalist in national debates in the media, taking every opportunity to explain his points of view (Suratmin 1989, 125–130).

It was a great disappointment for Baswedan that, despite all the support from politicians of different leanings, the Hadhramis ultimately did not achieve the same status as indigenous Indonesians. Due to precarious political circumstances (a succession of governments, economic recessions, and so forth) during the Old Order period, the treatment of the minority problem was postponed continually. Successive governments avoided the subject, afraid as they were of setting precedents. In contrast to this legal process, however, the actual social acceptance of the Indo-Hadhramis as Indonesians went extremely well. As more and more members of the minority filled important functions in a wide spectrum of society (the government, officialdom, diplomacy, the army, education, to name but a few), an increasing number of Indonesians no longer saw the Indo-Hadhramis as outsiders. The concomitant decline in discrimination resulted in the legal aspects causing less worry than they once had. Nevertheless, in times of societal unrest, the topic still comes to the surface. In 1980, the Minister of Manpower felt forced to declare that:

> the group of non-indigenous people who have already assimilated and integrated themselves and are considered indigenous people by the local

33 Interview Makarim, cassette XVIII, sides A and B. Cf. Suratmin, 1989: 123–125.

> community, such as those of Arab descent who have made a complete integration with the local Indonesians, […] have to be treated as a *pribumi* (indigenous) group.
>
> Cited in ALGADRI 1994, 176

This statement is at once telling and meaningless.

7 Conclusion

In 1970, Baswedan was appointed a "Pioneer of Independence" by the Indonesian government; as such, he received, both in Hadhrami circles and in the wider Indonesian society, the recognition he deserved. As a journalist and as a politician, he had played a determining role in breaching the isolation into which the Hadhrami minority had fallen. In words and deeds, he awakened his compatriots' consciousness of their hopeless position, and took the lead in the process of emancipation that brought them closer to other population groups. His services to the Hadhrami community can be summarized in three main points. Firstly, he was able to trace back the various dissensions to the division that really mattered, and to which all other conflicts were subordinate: the virtually unbridgeable gap in living style, mentality, and orientation between the *totok* and the *peranakan*. Secondly, Baswedan knew how to convince the Indo-Hadhramis that they had more affinity with Indonesia than with Hadhramaut, and that their loyalty should reflect that feeling. Thirdly, by founding a distinct *peranakan* association, the PAI, he succeeded in eliminating the monopolistic position of the *totok*.

Before the war, Baswedan had many enemies, but the more the *peranakan* came out of their shells after independence, the more he was praised for his foresight as the following incident illustrates. During the campaign for the first elections in 1955, as a candidate for Masjumi, Baswedan was invited to deliver a speech in Probolinggo. Before the meeting started, an old, grey-haired, respected man guided by his son approached him. Everybody stood up. The man introduced himself and asked Baswedan if he remembered him. He answered that he did not. The old man then spoke in the presence of the audience: "I am the one who opposed you after the foundation of the PAI and I have come here […] to apologize for all my mockery, for all my actions in the past."[34] Baswedan had this kind of experience more than once.

34 See Interview Makarim, cassette VI, side A.

His work was also pioneering beyond the Hadhrami community. His political activities in nationalistic and later national organizations, the articles he wrote in various newspapers and journals, as well as the publication of *Nusaputra*, all had the aim of informing outsiders about the situation of the Hadhramis and other "foreign" minorities, and to underline their right to become Indonesians. Although Baswedan was disappointed at the end of his career that the *peranakan* still did not have the same constitutional position as Indonesians of local origin, he was very satisfied with the practical integration of the Indo-Hadhramis into Indonesian society. Despite existing differences, they were more than ever before seen as compatriots by their fellow Indonesians.

CHAPTER 4

Aliran Baroe: A Mirror of Change within the Indo-Hadhrami Community

1 Persatoean Arab Indonesia (PAI) dan *Aliran Baroe*

In the decades leading up to the Japanese occupation (1942), profound social and cultural changes took place in the Arab minority community in the Netherlands East Indies.* From a rather withdrawn population group with a strong orientation toward Hadhramaut, its homeland, it developed into a community that increasingly identified with Indonesian society in general. This reorientation occurred especially among the majority of the *muwallad* or so-called Indo-Arabs, who formed the majority of the more than 70,000 Arabs in the Indonesian archipelago. In a relatively short time they became aware that they were actually more Indonesian than Arab and that their future lay in Indonesia, not in the southern part of the Arabian peninsula where most of them had never actually been.

This reorientation gained momentum on 5 October 1934 in Semarang, when on the initiative of the journalist A.R. Baswedan, about forty well-known Indo-Arabs from different classes founded the Persatoean Arab Indonesia (PAI) or Union of Indonesian Arabs. The main objectives of the PAI were the upliftment of the Hadhramis and their integration into Indonesian society.

To promote the upliftment of the Hadhrami minority and its integration into Indonesian society, the PAI was active in social, cultural, religious and political fields. Their political activities were primarily aimed at bridging the gap between the Arabs and the indigenous Indonesian population. However, it was not enough just to present oneself as Indonesian and identify with Indonesia. This idea had to be given substance, for example, by joining the Indonesians in their attempt to realize a post-colonial future. This was easier said than done. During the colonial period, the Arabs were classified as so-called Foreign Orientals and, like the Indo-Chinese, were legally below the Europeans and those considered equal to them, but above the indigenous population. Until

* This text includes several sections of an article published in Dutch under the title "Spot en provocatie. De strijd van het tijdschrift Aliran Baroe tegen misstanden in de Arabische gemeenschap in Indië." In *Tropenstijl. Amusement en verstrooiing in de (post)koloniale pers*, edited by Gerard Termorshuizen, 69–95. Leiden: KITLV Press, 2011.

the 1930s, the Arabs had primarily sought equality with the Europeans, but now they sought to place themselves on an equal footing with the Indonesians. This drastic turnaround did not easily translate into changes in their relations with the local Indonesians, partly because the latter did not care much as they had their own problems. The rapprochement between the two population groups was initially visible only in the political sphere, in the cooperation between Arab and nationalist parties and leaders. Of all the Indo parties, no party was closer to the Indonesian parties than the PAI.

Initially, PAI's social, cultural, and religious activities were aimed not so much at rapprochement or cooperation with the Indonesians, but rather at ending the relative isolation of the Arab community and the uneasy position it had come to occupy over time. It also sought to reduce the backwardness of the Arab community. The activities of the PAI had to a large extent the nature of a civilizing offensive, although that term was never used explicitly. It was an offensive designed to uplift the Arabs in the Indies and give them a better chance to develop by promoting knowledge and helping them adapt to the demands of the times. The offensive also had a strong moral dimension, for it discouraged reprehensible behaviour that stained the entire minority community, such as cruelty, usury, and short-lived marriages solely for carnal pleasure.

Civilising offensives take place everywhere and at all times. The term has been used to characterize the initiatives of civil organizations and political movements in nineteenth century Europe to combat "poverty and unemployment" and to promote "well-being and security," "chastity, decency, hygiene," as well as "family life and domesticity" (Kruithof 1980). Similarly, the so-called Ethical Policy introduced in the Dutch East Indies around 1900 was intended to allow the indigenous population to participate in the process of progress and prepare them for the modern era, however, without giving them any say in the matter (Bloembergen and Raben 2009, 7–24). The same applies to the activities of the Indonesian nationalist movements and parties in the 1930s. Each of them was concerned with the education and development of its constituency, just like political parties in the Netherlands. Each offensive had its own characteristics and emphasized its specific problems. That of the Arab minority cannot be separated from the weakening of the Arabs' ties to Hadhramaut and their increasing identification with the new Indonesia. The pursuit of integration to a high degree characterized the content of the process of civilization; in fact, they were two sides of the same coin. It consisted of becoming familiar with local and general knowledge, norms, values and customs that provided the Arabs with a place of equality among the peoples of the archipelago, and enabled them to participate in the process of modernization of the Indies.

The activities of the PAI included promoting better education for Arab children and organizing courses for adults on spiritual and secular subjects. To reach young people and women, two organizations were established: a youth organization, Laskjar PAI, and a women's organization, PAI Istri. Participants in national congresses of the PAI were always treated to entertaining and educational plays, which were later performed in local branches across the country. The plays, such as *Korban Adat*, *Mr. Faisal*, or *Fatimah* were written by party leaders and dealt with issues that were, to say the least, controversial in Arab circles. The performances attracted large audiences and more than once unleashed a storm of protest from opponents of the PAI, who felt seriously offended. The play *Fatimah*, written by Hoesin Bafagih, denounced usurious practices, the desolate state of Arab schools, and the continuing practice of *wulaiti* to marry again and again. The play led to such serious tensions within the Arab minority that, to avoid violence, performances in Jakarta and Surabaya had to be postponed. Later the play was staged under police protection.[1]

2 A New Journal, a New Direction

The PAI also published two journals, *Insaf* and *Sadar*. The first, headed by the journalist Hoesin Bafagih, was based in Surabaya. The second, headed by Baswedan, was distributed from the places where he happened to be staying to propagate PAI ideals and help establish local branches. In 1938, when *Sadar* had ceased to appear, a third journal, the monthly *Aliran Baroe*, was started in Surabaya. More than the previous two, it promoted ideas of civilization. It was not so much the official mouthpiece of the PAI, as a periodical for and of its adherents. Editorial responsibility, however, rested with the party leaders. Bafagih was again editor-in-chief, while Salim Maskati acted as director. Baswedan, the founding father of the PAI, contributed to almost every issue, at times under different pseudonyms. The monthly was published by the bookstore and publishing house of the same name, and was printed by Agil's press in Surabaya. In January 1939, the magazine had a circulation of 1,500 copies, but it reached a much larger number of readers. The directors had the amusing but practical habit of publishing the names of subscribers who had forgotten to pay their subscription, which apparently occurred frequently.

The first issue of *Aliran Baroe* appeared in June 1938, the last, issue 40, in November 1941. Each issue usually consisted of 22 pages, although the Idul

1 See next chapter.

FIGURE 4 Logo *Aliran Baroe*

Fitri special had twice as many. The articles were interspersed with numerous advertisements for Arab, Chinese, and European stores and businesses, and the products they show give a good idea of the pursuit of modernity in those days. The space on the cover below the title was usually filled with a full-page advertisement. Later, the title became part of a drawing of a small ship sailing on a sea with large waves, symbolic perhaps of the situation in which the Arab community then found itself. In 1940, when the self-confidence of the Indo-Hadhramis had greatly increased, the image was replaced with a drawing that better reflected the title *Aliran Baroe*: on the left, a globe and an owl, and on the right, an ocean liner, a car, and an airplane, heading for a new world, accentuated by skyscrapers. Initially the layout was rather cluttered, but over time it became an attractive and carefully composed magazine printed with the most modern techniques.

Aliran Baroe included articles on a wide variety of topics, from politics, Indonesian history, Islam, the position of women in the colonial Arab community, to education, literature, sports, film, and humour. Articles on current affairs, on e.g. relations and tensions within Arab circles or the Indonesian nationalist movement, interspersed with regular sections such as *Dari soedoet sejarah* (From a Historical Point of View), *Timbangan* (Opinion), *Loekisan hidoep* (Depiction of Life), *Ruang agama* (Religious Corner), *Taman poeteri* (Women's Garden), *Kesoesastraan* (Literature), *Dari sana sini* (From Here and There), and *Gado-gado Soerabaia* (All kinds of Things from Surabaya). Now and then a short story or a serialized novel was published that dealt with the fortunes of fictional Arabs in the archipelago, such as a businessman who was in danger of going bankrupt or a woman who had come down in the world. The stories were, as the saying goes, derived from real life and, as I heard several times, were devoured by readers. Occasionally, the monthly gave Indonesian nationalist and national religious leaders, such as Sukarno and Kjai Hadji Mas

Mansoer, the opportunity to express their views on developments in the Arab community, and what they expected from the Arabs in post-colonial Indonesia. Leaders of other foreign minority movements also reported on developments in their world.

A too-short but very interesting series of articles, always written by insiders, dealt with the various Arab communities in the country at the time. They give a good idea of the differences between Java, where internal divisions had long hampered progress, and the Outer Islands, where such enmity hardly existed, perhaps because there were considerably fewer Arabs there. This did not mean that their backwardness in the socio-economic field was less than in Java.

One of the articles is about Kaliwungu, a small village between Semarang and Pekalongan, where six or seven Arab merchant families lived at the time. Because of their status as *sayyid*, holy descendants of the Prophet, they were highly respected by the local Javanese. But at the same time, they misled the Javanese people in various ways. They sold incense to ward off evil spirits in the home, and amulets to promote pregnancy or make women look younger. They also sold Qur'ans that cost 70 cents at the market for 7.5 guilders (M.S. 1940).

An article on Sulawesi (Celebes) states that a fairly large number of people of Arab descent had almost completely assimilated into the local population, although they still differed from the locals in certain respects and were also seen by them as different. They were apparently all descendants of *wulaiti* who in the past had married off one local woman after another and after almost as many divorces had left their children to their own devices. According to the correspondent, they were mostly idlers and quite a few of them had "a bad character and depraved morals," as happens with "parents who are good at bearing children but are unable to raise or educate them." They were, the author emphasized, too lazy to leave the house and find their way in life, while their knowledge of the world and Islam was negligible, because their upbringing amounted to nothing. When children were asked what they had learned in school that day, the answer was invariably, "nothing new." The economic activities of the young did not differ from those of their elders: like them, they "worked only with their feet, while their hands, which give a better yield, hang beside their bodies like dead branches on a tree" (*PAI'ers* 1939, 20).

It is clear that *Aliran Baroe* published these descriptions because the editorial staff considered it a task of herself and the PAI to emancipate the community. They make it clear that many Arabs in all parts of the archipelago were in an undesirable and hopeless situation.

3 Indo-Hadhrami Nationalism and Islam

One issue that deeply divided the pre-war Hadhrami community in the Dutch East Indies was the relationship between Islam and nationalism. Many Hadhramis, especially those who had been born in Hadhramaut and their economic dependents, were very uncomfortable with the choice of the majority of Hadhramis, who had been born and raised in the Indonesian archipelago, to consider Indonesia—as the nationalists increasingly called the Indies—as their fatherland. They opposed Indo-Hadhrami nationalism that was gaining strength in the 1930s and of which the PAI was the main exponent. It is very remarkable that the opponents of a national identification with Indonesia referred for strategic reasons to the alleged incongruity between Islam and national identity, rather than to their Hadhrami roots. Apparently, they expected to gain more supporters this way. However, PAI supporters firmly rejected this incongruity. To underscore this position and to convince the doubters, a series of articles was launched in early 1939 under the title *Di sekeliling kebangsaan dan Islam*, On Nationality and Islam. From the outset, these articles—which, unlike others, were not always signed—focused on two questions: Does Islam allow loyalty to the homeland or country of birth, and if so, to what extent does this loyalty override religious obligations and responsibilities.

According to the opponents of the Indo-Hadhrami independence movement, both the Qur'an and hadith contain indications that loyalty based on nationality (*kebangsaan*), fatherland (*tanah air*), or place of birth (*tanah tumpah darah*) is not permitted. However, the proponents claimed that these sources do not say anything explicit on this subject. They called for a thorough study of the sources and a discussion based on facts, and accused their critics of being guided by sentiment, emotion, and prejudice (*Kebangsaan* 1939a, 8). Moreover, they reproached them for not paying attention to the profound social changes that had taken place over the centuries. It is as if they were still living in the "era of camel and packsaddle, the era of desert and dates" (*Kebangsaan* 1939a, 7).

For example, opponents frequently referred to statements or remarks based on tradition, such as "there is no nationality in Islam," "there are no nations in Islam," "for Muslims there is no nationality other than Islam," and "All Muslims are *saudara*, brothers and sisters, who cannot be divided by descent, by language, or agama" (*Kebangsaan* 1939c, 5). However, according to *Aliran Baroe*, these traditional beliefs should be seen as broad outlines or proverbial expressions, which have symbolic or spiritual meaning, but are not literally correct. Such statements should be categorized with assertions such as "if one Muslim is attacked, all Muslims are attacked." Although all Muslims can be called *saudara*, this does not mean that religious ties are the basis for the entire social

network. On the contrary, real (biological) and ideological kinship ties, as well as increasingly secular relationships, have played a prominent role in other areas of society from the very beginning of Islam. The composition and intensity of these ties varied according to time and place, but this did not mean that they were incompatible with Islam (*Kebangsaan* 1939c, 5–6).

A similar argument is used with regard to Islam and language, and Islam and homeland. It is often said that Muslims are united by one language. Although Arabic is the language of the Qur'an, and believers use it during ritual prayers and practices, local religious leaders in non-Arab countries preach and teach in their own vernacular, the same language used in non-religious spheres. Regarding *tanah air* and Islam, according to *Aliran Baroe*, one must distinguish between *Al-wathon Al-millie*, the homeland of Islam (*tanah air keagamaan*), and *Al-wathon Asj-sjachshi*, the country of birth (*tanah air kelahiran*). It is said that "to pay attention to the distant religious homeland, but to forget one's own familiar native soil, would be a violation of the religious rules that demand of its adherents that priority be given to what is nearby rather than nearest" (*Kebangsaan* 1939c, 6).

The assertion of the hardliners that there is no nationality in Islam must also be carefully dissected. It would be true for worship, for:

> in the case of *ibadat* there is indeed no question of nationality, rank, and descent. After all, before God everyone is equal and alike, there are no Arabs, no Adjam, there is no white or black, and no red or green.
>
> *Kebangsaan* 1939c, 7

Outside of religion, however, in the political sphere, and particularly in the struggle for independence, nationality had become more manifest and played an important role. As a result of political developments in the Middle East after the fall of the Ottoman Empire, for example, it was no longer sufficient to speak of Arabs in general. Rather, it had become necessary to refer to them as Arabs from Egypt, Palestinian Arabs, Hijazi Arabs, Arabs from Nejd, and Yemeni Arabs, depending on the political entity of which they were a part. As people began to organize on the basis of nationality, loyalty to the Arab world in general and to Islam was temporarily pushed into the background. According to the PAI, a similar process, albeit in a different part of the world and with different dynamics, was underway in Indonesia (*Kebangsaan* 1939c, 7).

Aliran Baroe also investigated whether nationality-based political parties in the Middle East were thwarted by lslamic political parties (*Kebangsaan* 1939a). The opposite was found to be true. In countries such as Egypt, Syria, and Iraq, all political movements were based on the principle of territoriality or nationality.

Prominent Muslim leaders, such as the ulama of Al-Azhar, explicitly recognized the existence of such movements, and some scholars even encouraged feelings of national consciousness. In all these countries, adherents of all religions could become members of nationalist parties. A Christian was a member of the general board of Egypt's Wafd Party. In Palestine, Muslims and Christians worked and fought together to defend their territory. To add strength to the argument, even less fortunate examples were cited, such as Syarif Husin's famous statement to the British that he was "first and foremost an Arab and only then a Muslim," by which he sought to legitimize his struggle to liberate the Arab territories from the then Turkish caliphate (*Kebangsaan* 1939a, 8). The other example concerned the way Ibn Saud, after conquering the Hijaz, prioritized his national aspirations over his promise to hand over the Hijaz to Ummat Islam.

Special attention was paid to a fatwa issued by the modernist Muhammad Rasyid Ridha in response to questions from Indonesia about nationality and Islam, in which he stated that it is the duty of Muslims in countries with different religions to work together with believers of other faiths to defend independence or make efforts to regain it, and when that is achieved to act together again for the upliftment and welfare of the homeland. According to him, all young Muslims should:

> set an example for their fellow-countrymen whatever their religion and beliefs. They should join them in all efforts for the freedom and glory of the country, both with knowledge, moral excellence and according to their ability, in full accordance with the rules of Islam [...]. They should show loyalty to their country and their people and should not forget that the Islamic religion already has a high regard for them and holds them in high esteem as a brother or sister of hundreds of millions of Muslims around the world. As a member of an entity, they are greater than their group, while their native land is like a tribe of their religious homeland.
>
> *Kebangsaan* 1939b, 14–15

An often heard complaint about the PAI was that its points of view ran counter to the interests of the Hadhramis and Indo-Hadhramis. By insisting that they were Indonesians they could lose their reputation, privileges, and merits, which were based in part on their distinctive religious position. For that reason, Oemar Hoebis, the well-known teacher at the Madrasah Al-Irsyad, wrote in the periodical *Al-Moersjid* "we should think 1001 times about the risks and the consequences" of a political movement that is not based on religion (Bafagih 1940, 9). *Aliran Baroe*, however, refused to back down, repeatedly letting its

readers know it did not want to be swayed by the glory and position of the Hadhramis. The issue was whether Islam allowed a political movement based on nationality, not whether this movement was profitable for its adherents. Not the possibility of profit or the risk of loss was studied, but rather the relationship between Islam and nationality. It turned out that there was plenty of room in Islam for a secular political movement or party. This conclusion did not take everyone's fancy to *Aliran Baroe*, the voice of the PAI.

4 Hadhramaut

Compared to other topics, the journal did not pay much attention to the situation in Hadhramaut at the time. In fact, the only contributions worth mentioning about the land of the ancestors are a number of letters, *Soerat-soerat dari Hadramaut*, written to the editor-in-chief in 1939 and 1940 by an inquisitive young teacher, a *qabili* and PAI-follower. The teacher, an Indo-Hadhrami from Java, or Jawi as he was called there, studied for two years at a *rubah*, an Islamic boarding school, presumably in Shibam. His letters sketch a devastating picture of daily life, customs, and traditions in the homeland. Because he feared possible repercussions, like the ending of remittances from his family or charges of outright slander, he did not want his name, place of origin in Indonesia, and place of residence in Hadhramaut to be mentioned in *Aliran Baroe*. He clearly did not enjoy his stay in Hadhramaut or appreciate the culture about which the *wulaiti* in Indonesia spoke in such bombastic and exaggerated terms. He felt disillusioned and resentful, and saw himself as a victim of what he called the fanatical ties that the older generations maintained with their homeland. Despite the fact that he wore *qabili* or *ksatria* clothes and a dagger, had adopted the matching haughty behaviour, and was respected and esteemed, he felt like a stranger (*Soerat Hadramaut* 1939a, 9). He wondered why parents would send their children to a place where "little or nothing can be learned." Religious education, as he saw it, left much to be desired, nor did one become "a real man" here, as fathers like to call it, or they must mean "learning feeling miserable, enduring starvation, or living without elegance." He writes:

> Often our activities here consist only of sitting or going from house to house singing *samroh*,[2] while the conversations are trivial, consisting of no more than repeating something that happened between one *qabili* and

2 Singing lslamic songs accompanied by *rebana*, tambourines.

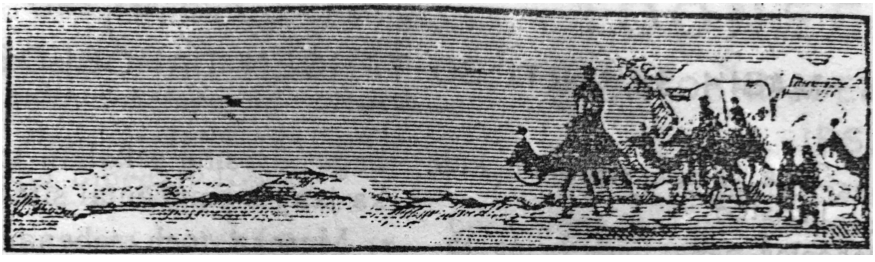

FIGURE 5 Vignette *Soerat-soerat dari Hadhramaut*

> another [*qabili*], or talking about something from some story from the Book of 1001 Nights.
>
> *Soerat Hadramaut* 1939a, 10

In this regard, he refers to a young Indo-Hadhrami who had recently returned to Surabaya after a six-years stay. Despite the fact that he had learned to speak Arabic in Hadhramaut, he could neither read nor write it. Actually, he astutely remarks, this young man differs in nothing from the *wulaiti* he himself met in Java. So what, he seems to be saying, is the added value of his coming to Hadhramaut? More than once, he compares his time there to life in prison or "a graveyard for youth who are still alive." While elsewhere young people are stimulated to grow up and make their mark on the world, he finds that "our youth [...] have already been killed or buried alive by their parents by being sent here" (*Soerat Hadramaut* 1939a, 10).

His criticism of the *rubah* is particularly revealing. He describes not only how austere, miserable, unhealthy and narrow-minded life is in this environment, but also how little he learns about Islam and Arabic culture (*Soerat Hadramaut* 1939c, 1940). Most students attend these Islamic boarding schools not to learn, but rather to be assured of free meals and drinks without having to work for them. It is literally a "pro-deo shelter" rather than an educational centre. The religious teachers or Muslim scholars hold views that are considered long outdated elsewhere. For example, they teach a kind of mysticism (*tasawuf*) that kills the soul rather than enlivening it. The world is depicted as a place of destruction and evil, a world from which believers should distance themselves by not trying to change or improve their own situation (*Soerat Hadramaut* 1939b, 5). *Nahwu*, Arabic language instruction, and *fiqh*, the study of laws pertaining to ritual obligation, are also strongly condemned. After years of residence, students and even teachers prove unable to write a descent essay or letter. *Fiqh* lessons are about trivialities, such as whether it is best to sit to the left or right of the imam, the leader of the communal prayer, in the

mosque during the daily ritual prayer. The writer regularly wonders what possesses parents to send their offspring to such anachronistic schools, and whether they realize how much grief they are causing their children (*Soerat Hadramaut* 1939c).

The letters depict the land of the ancestors, a desert interrupted by wadi, as a backward society surpassed in every way by Indonesia. It definitely seems to have been a place where especially sons of Indo-Hadhramis did not feel at home. They felt like outsiders in a society with which they thought they were familiar, and strangers among people with whom they had hoped to have a close relationship. No doubt *Aliran Baroe's* intention was to make this point clearly, and to put the relationship between Indonesia and Hadhramaut into perspective. This was, however, not well received, as might have been expected given the writer's insistence on anonymity. Protests from inside and outside the PAI were fiercer than anticipated, and the series was ended prematurely.

5 Women's Issues

One subject on which *Aliran Baroe* undoubtedly expressed revolutionary views was the position of women in Hadhrami circles, or what was aptly called *soal perempuan*, the women's question. No other organization than the PAI and no other journal than *Aliran Baroe* did more to promote the emancipation of Hadhrami women in Indonesia before World War II. Almost every issue dealt with the outdated position of Hadhrami girls and women. This in itself was groundbreaking, as anything concerning women was seen as *rahasia dalam*, a private secret, not to be discussed in public (Bafagih 1938a: 2). The journal had a regular women's section, *Taman puteri*, Women's Garden, which for a long time was written by Baswedan's wife, A.A. Noor. Other women also wrote for the monthly, often poetry, reflecting their state of mind, or a short report of a meeting or a women's excursion. This too was unusual, as most Hadhramis believed that women should refrain from such activities; even saying their names in public was forbidden, not to mention that it appeared in print. Although their contributions shed light on the unequal position of women in the Hadhrami community, it was men who wrote the most interesting articles on the subject, even in a special women's issue.

As early as the first issue (August 1938), the editor-in-chief, in an article entitled *Masjarakat Arab kebandjiran perawan*, The Arab Community Awash with Virgins, raised the issue of the increasing number of young women who remained unmarried, several hundred in Surabaya alone (Bafagih 1938a). Due

to the economic crisis of the 1930s, and the exceptionally high cost of a Hadhrami marriage, more and more young men postponed marriage, sought sexual satisfaction elsewhere, or decided to marry an Indonesian woman. Since daughters of a *sayyid* were not allowed to marry a lower-class man then (and sometimes still are), and *wulaiti* did not want to give their daughters in marriage to Indo-Hadhrami men, while men of other ethnic groups were taboo for almost any Hadhrami girl, there were many redundant young Hadhrami women of marriageable age. More and more of them were doomed to remain single. The only remaining option was to marry a so-called *bandot tua* (literally an old billy goat), a voluptuous old man who either had a lot of money or was held in high esteem. These were always ready to pluck the "fragrant flower buds ready to open" or the sweet-smelling budding girls and, if necessary, disown them in order to marry again. However, their numbers do not seem to have been large enough to meet the demand.

Between the lines, one becomes aware of the isolation of these women, both young and old, a theme that constantly recurs in articles about Hadhrami women (Bafagih 1938b). Until well into the 1930s, most Hadhrami women were, deprived of a ray of sunlight, confined to the house, where they spent their days cooking and doing household chores. They were generally illiterate and hardly knew what was going on in the world. Hadhrami men, writes Ismail Gafar (1941), saw their house as a hotel-restaurant and their wives as *hamba sahaya*, a slave of all kinds. They hardly spoke to their wives and instead gave orders. Time and again one reads that the husband acted as a guardian of his literally secluded and figuratively chained or imprisoned wife. Eye contact with visitors was strictly forbidden; they were addressed from behind a curtain or door. The Indonesian intellectual Hamka (1941, 11) notes that he once lived with a Hadhrami family for six months, and during that time he never saw the female relatives. When they went out, they were always accompanied by a male relative, and their carriage (*sado* or *deleman*) was closed with a piece of canvas. The passengers could only catch a glimpse of the outside world through the small openings between the canvas and the carriage. Ali Assegaf (1939), a member of the PAI's main board, observed after a visit to Hadhramaut that the separation between men and women in the homeland was much less strict and that manners were much more flexible than in Indonesia. The *qabili*, numerically the largest class, used no *hijab* or partition during social intercourse between men and women, while the *sayyid* were content with a thin demarcation. Women could even serve food to friends of absent husbands.

After the establishment of the PAI, there was a relaxation of seclusion for women, especially among the well-to-do middle class and the small wealthy business elite. Women went shopping together, went to the theater or cinema

with their husbands, and were even allowed to greet and talk to members of other ethnic groups, such as Indonesians, Chinese, and Europeans. During these outings, however, they were in no way allowed to look at male Arabs, let alone engage in conversation with them. For a long time, Baswedan, who taught courses to adult women, did not dare to look at his students and address them directly. At PAI meetings attended by both men and women, which was quite exceptional in Arab circles, a curtain separated the sexes. Attendees could hear but not see the speakers of the opposite sex. The party's executive committee was in favour of abolishing this separation, but realized that it might cause confusion among the public. The time was not yet ripe for it (*Rapat Mauloed* 1939: 1–2).

Aliran Baroe fought the physical, social and cultural isolation of Hadhrami women wherever it was possible. It vigorously promoted the education of girls and adult women, giving them more freedom of movement and allowing them to express their opinions. It advocated greater respect for women and a more balanced relationship between husbands and wives. On this last point, Ismail Gafar (1941) had some concrete suggestions. A married couple should eat together three times a day, discuss family problems together, meet each other halfway, and consciously share the joys and burdens of life: "That is what is called a household." Baswedan (1940) even wrote a book about the Prophet's family life, *Roemah Tangga Rasoeloellah*, The Prophet's Household, to make clear how different and respectful the relationship between husband and wife was in the Prophet's time, and to encourage his readers to change habits that were merely cultural additions rather than religious dictates.

Aliran Baroe also began a discussion on the *kerudung* or veil. Several contributors felt that wearing a veil was outdated and emphasized that according to Islam it is optional (*sunah*) rather than obligatory (*wajib*). Baswedan was not in favour of the veil because it accentuates the segregated position of women. However, the official position of the editors was that it was up to women to decide whether or not to wear a veil. To help readers come to an informed decision, *Aliran Baroe* began an interesting but endless series of articles on the use of the veil. Its neutrality in this regard did not prevent the magazine from publishing photographs from Egyptian newspapers showing young Hadhrami women without veils, with modern hairstyles and wearing makeup (Hayat Assegaf 1939; Dhijah Assegaf 1940). These pinpricks by the permanent staff, who also did not shy away from polemics, were characteristic of the monthly magazine throughout its existence.

At the time, not everyone appreciated these very progressive ideas about the position of women and they regularly caused unease among male readers. One loyal subscriber wrote that he shared many views in *Aliran Baroe*, but

their views on the position and role of women became too much for him. Others wondered if there were not more important things to worry about and if the editors knew what they were getting into. One reader even used the Dutch proverb "*Men moet geen slapende honden wakker maken*" (let sleeping dogs lie).

How contentious the emancipation of women was in their own circles is also shown by the opposition women encountered in their attempts to establish local PAI-Istri units. It was almost always the men who made trouble, arguing that the time was not yet ripe. It was only in April 1940, almost six years after the founding of the party, at the first lustrum congress, that the leadership succeeded in establishing a national women's organization.

6 Stories

Women were also often the focus of the stories that appeared in the magazine. Not infrequently, the content was drawn from reality. Readers, I was told, were captivated by the stories. The stories of Al-Moetanabbie, a pseudonym, were especially popular. One of his stories is about a penniless old Indo-Hadhrami woman, Habibah, who in the mid-1940s, in view of the impending danger of war, seeks advice from an Arab she had met in the past (Al-Moetanabbie 1940b). The man had given her *zakat fitri* years ago on behalf of Rabithah Alawiyah. She has heard that he works for the Luchtbeschermingsdienst (LBD; civil air protection service) and makes sure that no lights can be seen in the *kampung* at night. She thinks he knows all about the impending war and wants to ask him what to do if it breaks out. She also asks him for advice at the instigation of her grandchildren, two young girls of marriageable age, who are staying with her and, as was common in conservative Arab circles at the time, "have been caged for some time," that is, invisible to male outsiders (Al-Moetanabbie 1940b, 21). Since their parents died, Habibah takes care of these young virgins, who caused her much concern. Since the soldiers have left their barracks and all their neighbours have fled to the countryside, the girls, living in fear and uncertainty and crying daily, insist on leaving the city as well.

When the LBD worker visits Habibah at her request, he enters a house that is almost empty. Furniture is missing and a worn carpet lies on the floor. The only things that brightens up the house somewhat are two religious pictures: one of Nabi Muhammad's winged horse and one of the Prophet's footwear. In order to support the girls, the elderly, stooping woman had been forced to sell almost all of her possessions in the previous years of crisis. Until recently, the

girls made snacks such as *onde-onde* and fried bananas every day that were sold by an old female peddler, but there are no more customers left. The only important thing she still owns is a *kerbau*, a water buffalo, whose value she estimates at 17.5 guilders. She thinks this should be enough to flee and rent a house elsewhere.

The visitor is astonished at the isolation in which the old woman and her granddaughters live. There is no male relative to protect them and maintain contact with the outside world. Although they have distant relatives, these want nothing to do with these poor relatives. Also, the Arab community no longer cares about them. The time when rich Arabs gave something to people in need is long gone. Only from Al-Irsyad do the women still regularly receive a portion of rice.

The story contains wonderful dialogues between the visitor, who is increasingly puzzled by the domestic situation, and the old woman, who occasionally steps back to respond to what her granddaughters whisper to her from behind a curtain. When the girls wonder if the visitor might be sufficiently informed about the situation in the city, Habibah hits the curtain with her *tasbih* to express her indignation at their distrust. The visitor, realizing that the woman does not have the means to move temporarily, tries to reassure the small family. He emphasizes that "the country is peaceful now, there is nothing wrong, no need to be afraid, if something is going on later, the government itself will surely inform the people!" (Al-Moetanabbie 1940b, 22). Still, the girls remain suspicious, but eventually agree that he will stop by regularly to inform them of the state of affairs.

The compelling story paints an impressive picture of the plight of the poor in the Arab community in Surabaya (and indirectly elsewhere), of members of this minority who can barely keep their lives in order and are hardly aware of what is going on in the society at large, and become increasingly marginalized by setbacks. Not for nothing does the author have the visitor say that "the rich will flee, others will hoard rice for hard times," but that the poor like Habibah will "go hungry" or "die of despair" (Al-Moetanabbie 1940b, 23). The story also illustrates the increasing isolation of Arab women, young and old, in such circumstances.

In *Dibalik tirai tonel hajat*, Behind the Scenes of Life, another story by Al-Moetanabbie (1940a), a young woman, Roekijah, hears that her father wants to marry off her twelve-year-old sister to an elderly *wulaiti*, a very rich textile manufacturer. She considers it a disgrace, for the man in question "does not fit her, is not equal in rank, does not suit her and is not worthy of my younger sister Aminah" (Al-Moetanabbie 1940a, 8). She learns from her brother that their father is desperate for money, as the capital he obtained through the "sale" of

Roekijah has been completely exhausted. With the bride price of his new son-in-law, he thinks he can start a new business.

Roekijah does not want her sister to be in a similar situation like herself. She curses her uncle, who as *munsib*, head of the family clan, proposed the marriage and is now preparing it. She laments that her father did not consult her at all. A view that her brother refutes by saying that their father is a Hadhrami, who takes the position that women are not allowed to express their opinions and that "all she had to do as a woman was to listen and be submissive" (Al-Moetanabbie 1940a, 8). Roekijah, however, thinks that her father should have known better and learned from her recent bitter experiences. Her own old husband, to whom she was married off a few years ago, recently left for Jepara to meet a new budding girl and take her as his second wife (Al-Moetanabbie 1940a, 8). When this woman moves in with them, into the room next door, her husband expects her to meet her with forbearance, prepares food and drink for her, and serves and helps her dress. The very thought disgusts Roekijah, but her father has no problem with it. He believes, according to her brother, that this kind of suffering is common among women of Hadhrami descent. He told him:

> For Hadhramis one wife is not enough, and as a devoted wife he expects you to meet your co-wife with compassion and affection [...]. Only in this way is there hope for women that they may later enter heaven in the hereafter.
>
> AL-MOETANABBIE 1940a, 9

When she points out that *bandot tua* really should not be allowed to enter heaven, her brother indignantly exhorts her to silence and tells her that it is forbidden in this country to insult this group. If she is not careful, "on the day of judgment, your protruding tongue," as her father once said to her, "will dangle to the earth" (Al-Moetanabbie 1940a, 9).

In addition to Roekijah and Aminah, an older female relative, Rahmah, is also going through a difficult time. Her not so old husband, who was born in Hadhramaut, behaves very differently from Hadhramis who were born in Indonesia and has a very different character. For some months now, he has become a fanatical supporter of a local movement that wants to require wives of Arabs to wear full-body "desert clothes," as is common among the Bedouins. For Rahmah, this is totally unacceptable; she feels like an Indonesian Arab and not like an Arab woman from the desert. After she, against her husband's express wishes, had paid a visit of condolence without wearing a veil, he threw her out of the house along with all their children after a quarrel that had got-

ten out of hand. To make matters worse, he wants to marry the girl, whose rice they used to buy, as soon as possible. Although the child was already promised to someone else, the matchmakers had no problem coming up with a more profitable way for themselves.

This story also presents a very revealing and provocative picture of the vulnerable position of women in Arab circles. Reading between the lines, it is mainly the newcomers, the *wulaiti*, who are targeted because they refuse to adapt to the different conditions of the Arab community in their host country, and also the *munsib*, who instead of standing up for family and religious interests, lower themselves to pairing horny old men and not yet mature girls for nothing but the pursuit of maximum profit. They take advantage of their prominent position within families to push through such marriages.

7 *Gado-gado*

The most popular section of *Aliran Baroe* was undoubtedly *Gado-gado Soerabaia*, in which anything and everything was discussed in a humorous and mocking but also polemical manner. The text, always at the end of each issue, was written by Charraat, the pseudonym of a correspondent in Surabaya, who was well aware of what was happening in the Hadhrami communities in Java. He frequently larded his pieces with Arabic and Javanese words and expressions, even local dialects were not shunned. In his column he made fun of the shortcomings and irregularities in Hadhrami circles, wiped the floor with opponents of the PAI, and secretly lashed out at supporters who committed stupidities. Occasionally he also included letters from disgruntled readers, which were answered with the same biting wit. It would not surprise me at all if the writer was Hoesin Bafagih, who in his controversial play *Fatimah* dealt with similar problems and wrongs in the same way, and did not shy away from confrontation.

In one of the first sections of *Gado-gado*, Charraat draws a parallel between animals living on land as well as in water and Muslims living in two contrasting worlds. According to Shafi'i teachings, amphibians are filthy, evil and wicked creatures. They fall into the 'unclean' category and cannot be eaten. Charraat believes that "just in this time" there are many Muslims in Indonesia who have the same characteristics as these animals. They play two sides and live, so to speak, "one moment here and the next moment there" (Charraat 1938, 119). By their behaviour they are considered untrustworthy, mean and tainted. They are wrong and what they do is unacceptable. Although shari'a, the religious and social legislation based on the Qur'an, does not classify these people as

FIGURE 6 Vignette *Gado-gado Soerabaia*

an unclean group, Charraat believes it should be possible to introduce such a rule based on the principle of analogy (*qiyas, kias*), which is accepted as a source of law in Islamic tradition. He jokes that the situation of Muslims living in two worlds is figuratively similar to that of amphibians like crocodiles and leeches. He mentions these two species for a reason. The Indonesian word for crocodile, *buaya*, with the addition land, *darat*, means philanderer, while the Indonesian word for leech, *lintah*, with the addition *darat*, means usurer. In the world of adultry and usury, the Arabs in the Indonesian archipelago did not disappoint. Charraat took a playful but serious stand against these practices, which were especially prevalent among the *wulaiti* (Charraat 1938, 119).

In particular, he denounced the custom existing among this group of entering into short-term marriage contracts. In November 1939, a resident of the Semanggi Arab neighbourhood in Solo had written to him that an old debauchee had married and divorced nine times in a three-month period. Another man, who was considered holy, had married so many times that he had lost count. In addition, the quarter had many "erstwhile widows" who had been married for a week, two days, or three days, and divorced after only a few hours. It seems that these marriages were performed by a local *habib*, who was often invited to religious celebrations in Arab neighbourhoods all over Java to preach about good and evil. When he was staying somewhere for a week, he did, beside preaching:

> nothing else than close and dissolve marriages. Those who marry on Friday night come to collect their letter of divorce a week later. Marriages concluded on Saturday night are often annulled by the following Monday.
>
> CHARRAAT 1939d, 31

The scandal-hungry chronicler replies facetiously that these marriage maniacs had better take out a marriage subscription entitled to a substantial discount

for the conclusion of each marriage. Later he declares that those who allow this to continue, even if they are holy men and religious leaders, should be fried in *sambal*, a spicy sauce (Charraat 1940a, 19).

In August 1940, he learns that an Arab "matchmaker" in Semarang named Wak Ghadhi had kept an address list of local widows and virgins, including their body sizes and rates. Charraat (1940d) mockingly calls this disguised prostitution an example of a clever "trade strategy."

That same year, he directed his "poisonous barbs" at two well-known conservative *sayyid*, Idroes Al Masjhoer and Ali bin Jahja, who despised the ideas and ideals of the PAI and had formed a committee to promote the wearing of the burka (*burguk*) in Solo. Masjhoer had been associated with the *Hadramaut Courant* for many years, but after its demise he felt disappointed and withdrew from public discourse. Since then he has been earning a living as a batik producer. Bin Jahja began his career in Bondowoso, East Java, where he had been involved in organizing the resistance of local conservatives against supporters of the modernist Al-Irsyad. Then he had tried his luck as a teacher at a *madrasah*, an Islamic school, in Batavia. He evoked so much resistance that he was forced to retire to Hadhramaut for several years. After his return, he became a religion teacher again, this time in Solo. Bin Jahja's life, according to Charraat, consisted of a succession of failures. He compared him to the proverbial *burung dares*, the owl in Indonesian folktales, who sows death and destruction wherever he appears. After years of silence, both men were apparently ready for a new challenge to assert themselves publicly (Charraat 1940b, 1940c).

Charraat was well aware of what was going on in Solo and in successive issues of *Aliran Baroe* he gave a colourful report of the meetings and activities of the *kongsi* Masjhoer-Bin Jahja, as he mockingly called the committee they had formed. The *kongsi* believed that Arabs in Indonesia should be more compliant with Islamic rules. At one of the first meetings, Bin Jahja spoke out against "the moral corruption of many Alawiyyin men, especially the young, and particularly the women" (Charraat 1940b, 13). Another member said that Hadhrami women were too visible in the streets, walking around indecently dressed. He felt felt that women had lost their sense of shame. Just the smell of perfume that hung around them would justify a burka. A third thought that the difference between Hadhrami and Javanese women had completely disappeared. Initially, it was thought that it would suffice to explain that wearing a burka was a religious obligation, but a few months later stricter measures were proposed:

> Every Alawiyyin must force his wives and women under his supervision to wear a *burguk*. Women who do not obey this decree must be admon-

> ished up to three times. If they do not listen, all ties must be severed. They must not enter their homes again, even in the event of a death. The same applies to a wedding.
>
> CHARRAAT 1940b, 13

Because this moral decay was attributed to the PAI, the *kongsi* also zealously advocated an economic boycott of PAI members, and the dismissal of PAI members who worked in the local batik industry (Charraat 1940e, 20). The *kongsi* also began to raise funds to purchase burkas for women who did not have sufficient resources to purchase one themselves. At the same time, steps were taken to expand the burka actions to other places in Java, such as Magelang, Wonosobo, and Surabaya. Especially the announcement that Masjhoer would come to Surabaya elicited laughter from Charraat. He warned him in advance that his turban and his *jubah* would turn red from the *sirih* (betel leaf quid) spit directed at him from behind the *kereh* (bamboo lattice blinds). It soon became clear that the plan of the *kongsi* Masjhoer-Bin Jahja in Solo and elsewhere was doomed to failure. In Solo, the women of the Arabs revolted *en masse*. Salim bin Djindja, a well-known Arab speaker, who was opposed to the action, proposed at a local PAI meeting before an enthusiastic audience of 150 women that all burkas be buried in a pit (S.A. 1940, 12). Because of all the opposition, the two "heroes" even felt compelled to flee the city. According to an excited Charraat, "most women would rather be dead or killed than become a public figure by wearing a burka" (Charraat 1940c, 19). Other women had no qualms about being disowned three times, which amounted to divorce. Of course, it did not come to that in reality, although the wife of a member of the *kongsi*, after ten years of marriage and after bearing eight children, was shown the door because she was improperly dressed during a condolence meeting. The wife of another member was disgraced by her husband for the same offense during a visit to the sickbed of an acquaintance in the presence of desperately crying women (S.A. 1940, 12). They were, however, among the few. Elsewhere the *kongsi* had no chance of success either, although there it was mainly men who made themselves heard. In Batavia it was not the supporters of the PAI who distanced themselves from them, but young people from Rabithah Alawiyah, the conservative organization to which Masjhoer and Bin Jahja belonged. During his visit to Surabaya, Masjhoer was scornfully called Habib Burguk. When a group of Hadhrami footballers in a bus saw him on the road, they asked the driver to stop so they could publicly boo him (*Mana dia 1940*; S.A. 1940, 12).

In the following issues, too, Charraat continued to be entertained by the adventures of these two conservative Arabs yearning for influence, even after they had accepted defeat and quietly returned to Solo. His finest hour came

when he learned that Bin Jahja's brother-in-law, a wealthy man and religious scholar who had studied at Al-Azhar, was visiting from Singapore. He was accompanied by his wife, who "wore no *burguk*, but what's more..... was dressed in Hollywood attire!" She wore "a reddish skirt of starched silk, a straw hat with chicken feathers above a Russian voile à la Paris [...]. While she had the same elegance and air as Abkaar and Hayat Assegaf," the two modern young Hadhrami women from Egypt, of whom "provocative" photographs had previously been published in *Aliran Baroe* (Charraat 1940f, 18). His wife moved in a way that was unprecedentedly modern for Solo and it must have been quite an experience to see her walking in the Arab neighbourhoods. Bin Jahja and Masjhoer behaved toward her husband like "mice to a cat" and did not have the courage to bring up their former views on women's clothing. The other *kongsi* members, complicit in propagating the burka, also showed their "friendliest faces," laughed where necessary, and lay like sycophants at the feet of this prominent guest (Charraat 1940f, 18).

Another figure who was a regular target was Moh. Bin Abdallah al-Amoedi, who had founded the Indo-Arabische Beweging (IAB; Indo-Arab Movement) in 1939. The movement with a Dutch name emphatically opposed the goals of the PAI. It wanted nothing to do with Indonesian nationalism, and:

> strove to strengthen the sense of *rasgevoel* (racial consciousness), both within and outside the movement, as well as to increase the awareness that one was and should remain an Arab.
>
> PLUVIER 1953, 91

A position that was anything but unwelcome to the colonial government, as it could use some counterweight to the nationalist movements. The movement had especially supporters among the Arabs who believed that their economic interests would be better safeguarded by a Dutch than by an Indonesian administration. Al-Amoedi was portrayed as a scatterbrain, who devised one manifesto after another and who liked to dance to the tune of the colonial government. For example, in October 1939 he spoke out, to the dismay of the Indonesian nationalist parties and the PAI, against the proposed GAPI campaign for an Indonesian parliament. In the nationalist press, the abbreviation IAB now stood for "Indische Afgeleefde Bokken," Indo-European worn-out old goats, or "Ini Akalan Bulus," this is a filthy trick (*Manifest mesoem* 1939, 25).

For the PAI, al-Amoedi's comings and goings were like a red rag to a bull, and he soon became a target of *Aliran Baroe's* readers. Charraat did not miss an opportunity to make fun of him. He mocked him when al-Amoedi, on the occasion of the birth of Princess Irene of the Netherlands in 1939, organized a

parade consisting of some hundred Indonesian workers of a rich member of the IAB dressed in traditional Middle Eastern garb (Charraat 1939b, 20). All this to the dismay of the local Hadhrami community. He openly chuckled when the IAB was not invited to participate in the Al-Irsyad congress in Surabaya in 1939, while all local organizations, "small, big, old, new" were present (Charraat 1939c, 19).

Charraat was also amused by the failed educational activities of the IAB. Al-Amoedi had founded an Arab school in Surabaya, where children would learn Arabic and Dutch. His promises, however, were not kept. The goals of the school changed constantly, "just like those of the IAB," and teachers came and went: "From Mrs. Blue to Mrs. Purple, from Mrs. Long Hair to Mrs. Curly Hair, from Mr. Thick to Mr. Thin, from Ustadz Fez Iraq to Ustadz Kopiah." The name of the school also varied: Al-Marief became Al-Marak, which then changed again to successively the Hollandsch-Arabische School (HAS), the Arabisch-Hollandsche School (AHS), the Moderne Arabische School and PHAS (Charraat 1940e, 19). At one point, according to Charraat, a new nameplate was removed even before the paint was dry, so that for a while the school had no name at all.

Also hilarious is Charraat's account of a lecture Dr. Soekiman of the Partai Islam Indonesia (PII) gave in the IAB building in the harbour city. During the lecture, al-Amoedi sat in one of the front seats and no doubt expected the speaker to praise the IAB. But immediately after the start, Dr. Soekiman gave a slap in the face to all those who did not support the GAPI action. Charraat watched with *schadenfreude* the behaviour of al-Amoedi, who red-faced grinned from ear to ear as he participated in the long applause of the audience, but had "definitely taken a few aspirins upon returning home" (Charraat 1939e).

The chronicler of Hadhrami life in Java also mocked a small but prominent group of wealthy Rabithah Alawiyah members, who were idolatrous of countries such as Egypt, Iraq, or the Njed, the central region of the Arabian peninsula, where Ibn Saud held sway. They wore the headgear and clothing from those areas, such as the fez, tarboosh, turban, and *jubah*. In their homes hung pictures of King Faisal II of Iraq, or of Faruk, the king of Egypt, and they followed political developments in these countries closely. Unlike the PAI supporters, they did not want to identify with Indonesia, and they also increasingly distanced themselves from Hadhramaut, the land of their ancestors, which they had come to regard as a backwater. They wanted to emphasize their Arabness by orienting themselves toward countries that played a leading role in the Arab world in those years. Charraat not only scoffed at the clothes they wore, which Arabs in those countries had already shed thirty years ago, but above all accused them of betraying their roots and refusing to recognize that their future lay with Indonesia (Charraat 1939a).

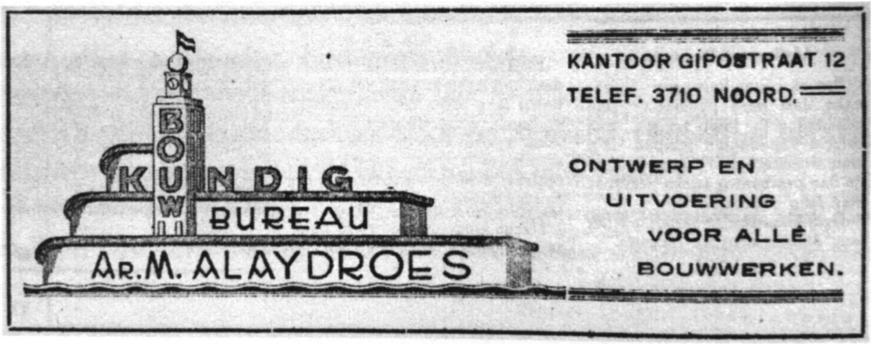

FIGURE 7 *Kepeteit* advertisement

He also ridiculed the pompous, pretentious or downright obsequious behaviour of several Hadhramis, both within and outside their community. It often led to what he called *kepeteit* or *kepetit*, a term for doing something that one thought was appropriate, but which is in fact hilariously improper (Charraat 1939d, 32). For example, he knew many members of the community:

> who are always in a hurry as if they had to do something very important that had to be taken care of at once, but in fact have nothing to do at all; they do this on purpose, so that others do not think, 'he has nothing to do.'
>
> *Kepetit* 1940

Another example is that of an Arab store that sells all kinds of products of Arab origin with the logo of the camel and the date on them (symbols of Hadhramaut), but during the end of Ramadan celebration, flies the Egyptian flag on the facade of the store. He also considered inappropriate the custom of the Arab owner of a shoe store, who always put a sign in his window at the end of the fasting month with Idul Fitri wishes in Dutch, while he had no Dutch customers. Of the same order, according to Charraat (1939d, 32), is the habit of several subscribers of *Aliran Baroe* of posting congratulations in English in *Aliran Baroe* on the same occasion, while only a dozen or so readers are proficient in this language. *Kepeteit*!

8 Conclusion

I could elaborate on a lot of other matters, but I hope it has become clear that the nationalist attitude and the civilizing offensive, the labels that typify almost all the writings in *Aliran Baroe*, are actually two sides of the same coin.

The journal reinforced the Hadhramis' identification with Indonesia as fatherland and was a leading force in ending their relative social and cultural isolation in Indonesia. The articles covered many fields and facets and were of an unprecedented comprehensiveness for the time. The articles challenged the anachronistic social structure of the minority, clarified frustrations, broadened knowledge of the outside world, and enabled readers to free themselves from the iron grip of the conservatives, follow their aspirations, and enable them to meet the demands of the times. For anyone who wants to understand the situation of the Hadhramis before World War II, *Aliran Baroe* is a gold mine.

CHAPTER 5

Fatimah: Arab-Indonesian Nationalism on Stage

In the 1930s, an increasing number of nationalist-oriented movements and parties in the Dutch East Indies started to stage dramas at special events and festive occasions, such as a congress, an anniversary, and other days of remembrance.* They were aimed at adding luster to a meeting, entertaining the audience, propagating ideals, bringing up social questions, furnishing information, and promoting emancipation. It was a kind of educational theatre that was directed at underlining the signature of the organization and re-enforcing the identity of its members. Such events became popular among Indonesians and Asian minorities, such as the Chinese and Arabs, who were politically and socially separately organized, in full accordance with the official division of the population into Europeans, *vreemde oosterlingen* (Foreign Orientals), and Indonesians.

The plays were based on the European model and had little or nothing to do with the traditional forms of theatre of these population groups, in which dance, music, and masquerade often played an important role. The genre, called *tonil*—from the Dutch *toneel* (play)—or *sandiwara*, was usually staged in the *schouwburg*, the playhouse of the European community. The stage plays were written by a member of the organization concerned, capable of writing in an eloquent style, and were performed by players recruited from their own ranks. Almost every branch of a national political or social organization had its own drama club, alongside other secondary associations such as sports clubs, a women's society, and a drum band.

In this article, I want to dwell upon the drama *Fatimah* that was staged in Semarang in 1938 at the third congress of the Persatoean Arab Indonesia (PAI), the Union of Indonesian Arabs. The PAI was founded in 1934 by some Indo-Hadhramis, so-called *muwallad* or *peranakan*, who saw it as their main goal to advance the emancipation of the Hadhramis and their integration into

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society at large. In the footsteps of the Indische Partij, the party of the Indo-Europeans, and the Partai Tionghoa Indonesia, the party of the Indo-Chinese, its founders accepted Indonesia as their fatherland and Indonesian culture as their culture, sentiments that were not universally shared in these minority circles.

Fatimah was the second drama to be performed at a PAI congress and was written in Malay by Hoesin Bafagih, who also wrote the earlier play (Bafagih 1938c). The play, which consisted of eight acts of various lengths, was written at the request of the General Board of the PAI. The PAI was so pleased with the result that, at the congress, an inexpensive trade edition of the text was offered for sale. The drama was acted out by both leading figures and ordinary members of the union. In the congress programme, it was announced using the words "sensational," "sad," and "moving."

The play was well received by PAI followers, but came as a bombshell to other members of the Arab community. It led to so many objections among opponents of the organization that further performances had to be postponed. For this reason, the play provides a unique entrance into the preoccupations and frustrations of Arabs in the Dutch Indies in the years leading up to World War II. It shows what members of the minority were bothered about, and what was thought necessary to end these problems. Plays, like other cultural expressions such as ballads, songs, folk operas, prayers, proverbs, and poems, as Reynaldo Ileto (1988, 191–199) and others have made clear, are indispensable for understanding societies from within and "from below."

1 Hoesin Bafagih

Hoesin Bafagih was born in the harbour city of Surabaya around 1900, and died there in 1958. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, Surabaya had the largest Arab community in the Dutch East Indies. The Bafagihs, who belonged to the *sayyid* class, originally came from Tarim, one of the most important cities in Hadhramaut. Hoesin Bafagih was most probably born into a well-to-do and progressive Indo-Arab family. As a child he attended the Al Khairiyah school, the first modern Arab school in Ampel, the Arab quarter of Surabaya, where, in addition to religious topics, Western subjects were taught in the Malay language.

After his school years, he joined Moeroatoel Ikhwan (Respect for Brothers), the first Arab association in Surabaya, founded in 1911. He also became a member of Al-Tahdhibiyyah (educational organization) which was founded in 1924. Both associations strove for the emancipation of Indonesian-born Arabs

and turned against the dominant position held by members of the local Arab community who had been born in Hadhramaut. In 1926, together with Salim Maskati, the first journalist of Arab descent in the country, he founded the journal *Zaman Baroe*, which was affiliated with Al-Tahdhibiyyah. Because of a breakdown in the cooperation between the Indo-Arabs in the educational organization, the journal became defunct after two years. That same year Bafagih and Maskati each started their own periodical, in which they regularly attacked each other's points of view. While Maskati and his *Lembaga Baroe* took the side of the reformist association Jamiyah al-Islah-wal-Irsyad (The Association for Reform and Guidance, or Al-Irsyad) which had been founded in 1915, Bafagih and his *Al-Mahdjar* supported Rabithah Alawiyah (The Alawite League), a traditional-oriented organization, established in 1927 (Mobini-Kesheh 1996, 242–243). Their differences in opinion, however, did not lead to a personal split between the former colleagues. Bafagih later wrote about that period that they "were as hostile to each other as water and oil, always fought and attacked each other, although every night I and Saudara Salim Maskati went out together!" (Bafagih 1939a, 2).

With the founding of the PAI, a new, this time national and more successful, effort was made to improve the social position of Indo-Arabs. From the start, Bafagih, one of the pioneers, played an important role in the PAI, especially as journalist and writer. Between 1937 and 1942, he regularly contributed articles to the PAI journal *Insaf* (Awareness). In 1938 he became editor-in-chief of *Aliran Baroe* (New Direction), a new PAI monthly meant for the rank and file of its followers, during the first year together with his old friend and nemesis Maskati. His articles, written with a vitriolic pen, surpass the other pieces in the journal, and reveal a thorough knowledge of the workings of the Arab community. No other Indo-Arab journalist—even not A.R. Baswedan, the founder, leader, and ideologist of the PAI—surpassed the insights Bafagih's writings show about his own population group. He wrote about miscellaneous topics, such as the stifling "confinement" of Arab women in their houses; about young women who could not be married off to their peers because of the high marriage costs involved, and either became spinsters or fell into the hands of rich, old "billy goats"; about the visible and invisible poverty in the Arab quarters; and about the need for better education. His articles all reveal an enormous empathy and social consciousness.

Not only his writings on social issues, but also those about Islamic topics, in particular about the veil, show how progressive he had become. He did not shrink from breaking taboos in this field as well. A few of his articles were published in two booklets, entitled *Isra'a dan Mi'radj* and *Soal Kekoedoengan* (Bafagih 1938d and 1941).

Bafagih also showed himself to be a playwright and director. For the second congress of PAI in 1937, he wrote the play *Korban Adat* (Victim of Tradition), in which he attacked the unnecessary and inconvenient clinging to out-dated customs and traditions. I have never seen the manuscript, which seems to be lost, but a promising introduction to it was published in *Aliran Baroe* (Bafagih 1939c, 5–7). There the writer mentions that at the time a thoroughly rewritten and adapted version of the play was staged for a wider audience, in which the focus is on Indonesian rather than Arab customs.[1] With *Fatimah*, which was first performed at the third PAI congress in 1938, Bafagih experienced his finest hour, despite fierce attacks by his enemies.

His PAI colleagues admired him. Baswedan wrote:

> I think there is not one of us who is more popular [in Arab circles] in Surabaya than Hoesin Bafagih [...] Readers from outside the city, who have never met Hoesin face to face, must imagine him to be a surly person. Wrong! He is a hospitable person, with a gracious demeanor. His smile does not abandon him, even if people confront him in extreme anger! I know, many people have felt the sharpness of Hoesin's pen! Moreover, now and then I have myself experienced this! However, because I know that this sharpness is honest and sincere, and that, moreover, not all that is in his heart is brought out, he certainly may be forgiven!
>
> BASWEDAN 1939b, 13

Hamid Algadri (1994, 17) called him an "Islam reformer and courageous demolisher of old customs and conservatism." In the Surabaya area he became known as "Bapak Fatimah" or "The Father of Fatimah."

Little is known about Bafagih's journalistic and political activities after the dissolution of the PAI in 1942. From *Kronik Revolusi Indonesia*, it appears that in March 1946 Bafagih was arrested in Surabaya by the British military police, together with Alwi Joefri, another former board member of PAI, and several Indo-Arab *pemuda*. In one way or another, they must have tried to thwart the efforts to reinstall the colonial government (Pramoedya Ananta Toer et al.

1 On January 25, 1941 members of the Indonesian Student Organization (Roekoen Peladjar Indonesia; Roepie) in the Netherlands staged in their clubhouse in Leiden a play entitled *Korban Adat*. Roepie had held a competition among its members for stage plays and Moh. Ibnoe Hadjar was the winner with a text that had the same title as Bafagih's play of 1938. It might have been the Indonesian adaption Bafagih spoke about in 1939 and which he eventually did not write himself. Unfortunately, the text of Ibnoe Hadjar is also untraceable. See *Leids Dagblad*, 27 January 1941; Poeze 1986, 303.

1999, 141). In 1950 he became secretary of the Conference Body for Indonesians of Arab Origin (Badan Konperensi Bangsa Indonesia Toeroenan Arab) which devoted itself to secure the same legal status for Indo-Arabs as Indonesians (Algadri 1994, 135–136). He also became a member of the Panitia Sensor Pilm, the national Film Censor Board, a remnant of colonial times. It gave him, a true fan of cinema, the opportunity to watch new releases.

Hoesin Bafagih lived the greater part of his life in Surabaya, where he owned the Marga Hayu textile factory, which made hand-loomed sarong. He often went to Jakarta, either to collect payments from mainly Chinese shopkeepers in Glodok, to whom he had send his fabrics, to attend PAI meetings, or to visit his third wife and his children of this marriage. Bafagih married four times, each time with an Indo-Arab woman, the second and third after her predecessor had died. His first two wives came from Surabaya, his third from Jakarta, and his fourth came from Bangil near Pasuruan. Altogether he fathered eleven children, five of them with his third wife, Bahdjah Bafagih, a sister of the well-known journalist and diplomat Asa Bafagih. In his memoir *Ajahku* (My Father), the writer Hamka refers to the wedding reception in Jakarta of Hoesin's third marriage in Jakarta, at which all the leading lights of the Arab movement were present (See John M. Echols 1956, 44; Hamka 1982, 225).

Syakib, the eldest son from his third marriage, was about ten years old when his father died. He remembers him as a friendly person, who, when he was in Jakarta, used to take his children to Jalan Blora for a snack. He also bought them comic-book versions of famous epics, because he thought that they could not start reading young enough. He was a well-read man, who named the children from his third marriage after well-known figures from Arab literature, something quite exceptional in Arab circles at the time. From the stories his son heard about his father, he knows that he was often consulted on social and religious matters by relatives, neighbours, and friends in the Arab community.

After his death Bafagih was buried in Pegirian Cemetery in his beloved Surabaya.

2 The Story Line

The play *Fatimah* is about a succession of tragic incidents occuring in the family of the wealthy trader Nasir bin Umar Asyaibie. Nasir is seriously ill and he feels the end is drawing near. Before his death, he wants to marry off his daughter Fatimah to Mochtar, a teacher at an Arab school, of whom he is very fond. Although young men from rich families stand in line to marry Fatimah,

he prefers the poor, but reliable, Mochtar, who had been one of her teachers. He expects that she will be happy with him. Because Fatimah is still a child, a marriage contract (*nikah*) is drawn up, but the couple will only start living together (*kawin*) when she reaches the appropriate age. Until that time she will stay with her mother, and her huge legacy for the time being will be entrusted to the *weeskamer*, a colonial public body that administers inheritances.

At the same institution, Nasir also deposits an amount for a son he had fathered at an early age with a Buginese woman on one of the eastern islands of the Indonesian archipelago, but whom he had abandoned three months after the birth of the boy. For years he had been searching for this son, but without success. If he is not found within the next fifteen years, his inheritance will legally pass to Fatimah and her older brother Yusuf. Yusuf is the only one of Nasir's children that will get his share of the legacy immediately upon the death of his father, and is the black sheep of the family. He is a good-for-nothing, has bad friends, comes home in the middle of the night, drinks beer and whisky, chases women, and spends his money right, left and centre. Nasir has no confidence in him, and leaves the daily affairs of his business to his own younger brother Mansur, Yusuf's uncle. Yusuf sees it as a disgrace that his sister, "the star of the city" and "the hope of all rich men's sons," should be married off to a penniless person such as Mochtar. He blames his uncle for encouraging the marriage so as to increase his own influence in the family firm. After the death of Nasir, he sacks his uncle and in no time makes a complete mess of things.

Two years after his father's death, Yusuf has squandered almost all his inheritance of 75.000 guilders, a fortune at that time. Shopkeepers and moneylenders queue in front of his house to demand payments. Encouraged by two sponging friends, Salim and Umar, who would like to continue their easy life, he tries to break off the yet to be consummated marriage of Fatimah and Mochtar and become her guardian. If successful, he will be able to appropriate her inheritance from the *weeskamer*. However, they will need the assistance of Mansur, the couple's most important advisor. Without his help the plan will have no chance. They anticipate that Mansur, despite the split between him and Yusuf, will be prepared to mediate for a fee as he has no job, and has already had to sell his house. Yusuf summons both his uncle and Mochtar, and tells them that Fatimah wants to end her relationship with Mochtar. As compensation, he offers both of them a large amount of money that will be paid as soon as the divorce papers (*surat talak*) are signed. Both men indignantly reject the proposal. Mochtar, who loves Fatimah deeply, will only agree if she tells him in writing that she wants to break off the suspended marriage (*kawin gantung*). Fatimah is unwilling because her love for Mochtar has grown even stronger over time.

FIGURE 8 Indo-Hadhrami woman in Java (circa 1890)
PHOTO COLLECTION KITLV, LEIDEN, SHELF MARK 86640

Yusuf next decides to give a substantial contribution to the school where Mochtar works, and to put pressure on the board of governors to fire him. Without a job, he reasons, his brother-in-law might be more inclined to accept the offer. However, as soon as Mochtar gets wind of this scheme, he hands in his resignation. For some time he has not felt comfortable at this Arab school,

where the governors constantly interfere in educational matters and prevent innovations.

Both Mansur and Mochtar are now without incomes. Mansur proposes that they pool their savings, buy goods such as hair oil, perfume, face powder, and incense, and sell these on the streets and markets. Initially Mochtar objects since he is not accustomed to, and feels ashamed of, this type of work, but he is eventually persuaded. Day in, day out, the two men walk with their *bangkelan*, wares tied up in cloths, and soaked to the skin through the city in search of customers. One day they pass, on their way to a market, a bar and restaurant full of guests. Mochtar suggests going round the tables to sell things, and asks Mansur to wait for a moment. Inside the restaurant he meets, by chance, Yusuf, Salim, and Umar who already have drank a few to many. He is frightened, but instead of moving on he salutes them in the respectful way common among Muslims. Yusuf feels insulted to be greeted in full public view by this "poor and dirty bastard" and beats him up with the help of his friends, after which they pelt him with empty bottles and pour beer over him. Mansur comes to Mochtar's rescue and knocks Yusuf down. To avert further difficulties within the family, the business partners decide to leave on the first boat to the Little Sunda Islands to try their luck over there. Without their presence, Yusuf will not have an opportunity to enforce a divorce on Fatimah, who they inform of their departure through an intermediary.

Salim subsequently presents a new proposal to get hold of money to the desperate Yusuf. In five years time the inheritance of Yusuf's missing brother, if he has not yet appeared, will be shared between him and Fatimah. If he wants, he could sell his future share, for a certain amount, to a money-lender. Yusuf, who is completely down and out, does not see any other solution. Together they visit the Qur'anic teacher and usurer Ammi Ubud who, after a short discussion, offers five hundred guilders for the inheritance, which will be worth a hundred times that when it comes free.

More than one and a half years later, Mansur and Mochtar are still travelling around as itinerant traders on the eastern Indonesian islands, and are doing good business. One afternoon, looking for a place to spend the night, they meet Pak Saptu, a Buginese, who also comes from afar. He is staying with an Arab friend who he is sure will be pleased to accommodate them. On arrival, the friend turns out to be tuan Ahmad, Mochtar's father, who had left his home to search for his son. For months, all the letters he had sent him had been returned. From the former school he had eventually heard that Mochtar had left the city. During his journey Ahmad had become seriously ill, so that he had been forced to settle here for the time being.

Mochtar tells what has happened over the past years and apologizes for the fact that he has married without his father's approval, but that the marriage

has yet to be officially completed. Although Fatimah is now fully grown, her brother remains opposed to the marriage. Mochtar's father asks to which population group she belongs and what the name of her father is. When Mochtar answers that she is a daughter of Nasir bin Umar Asyaibie, he is shocked. Quivering with emotion and lifting his hands towards heaven he calls out that his son cannot marry a child of Nasir and that the relationship must be severed. Mochtar does not understand his father's reaction, bursts into tears, and shouts that he loves Fatimah and does not want to forsake her. But the old man sticks to his guns and says with a trembling voice: "the earth will split, the lightning will strike you, heaven will be shattered, the angels will curse, and the throne of God will shudder [...] if you marry her." It turns out that Ahmad is not Mochtar's real father, but that he adopted him when he was five years old, four years after Mochtar's mother, Maimunah, a daughter of Pak Saptu had died. Pak Saptu, who did not have other relatives, felt compelled to hand him over when he, lacking other income opportunities, could obtain a job in Deli. His real father is ..... Nasir, who had abandoned his mother. Fatimah is thus his half-sister whom he cannot possibly marry.

Mansur, who is thus now also Mochtar's uncle, takes on the onerous task of informing Fatimah of the new situation. Mochtar himself agrees to first travel with his grandfather, Pak Saptu, and his foster father, tuan Ahmad, to the island where he was born to ask the village head for a written testimony for the *weeskamer* that he is a son of Nasir, after which they will meet up with Mansur. After arrival in his home city, Mansur meets the family's houseboy who tells him that Fatimah has become ill. Yusuf, in the meantime, had been imprisoned for debt by a money-lender, after his mother had no more money to pay his creditors. After two months in jail he had become crazy; he is now at home and behaves as an anxious and mournful child.

The play ends with the return of the still disconcerted Mochtar in the company of the two older men. As they walk towards the city, they hear, in the distance, a group of people continuously reciting the confession of faith: La ilaha illa Allah. It appears to be a funeral procession. It is a horrifying scene, and when the grieving people pass them, shivers run down their spines. At the tail-end of the procession walks, with his head bowed, a seemingly moved and confused person. As he sees them, he approaches them and tries to say something, but his voice stalls: it is Mansur.

> "What's the matter? [...] Whose remains are these?" asks Tuan Ahmad slightly impatiently.
> "Where is Yusuf? How is Fatimah doing? Why are you here?" adds Mochtar [...].

Mansur stammers no more than a few words.
"What is it? Friend … where is Yusuf? Fatimah, is she all right?" cries Mochtar loudly.
"Mochtar. Ammi Ahmad," replies Mansur in tears […], "Yusuf … has … become crazy." "Crazy …???," repeats Mochtar and Tuan Ahmad dismayed … "and Fatimah? Where is she? Where is she?" asks Mochtar, again worried and restless.
"Fatimah …. Fatimah?" sobs and wails Mansur, "Fatimah? This … this … this is her body … Fatimah … …has died."

3 Contested Issues

As said earlier, Bafagih wanted to do more than present the spectators with a gripping performance and give them a pleasant night. The playwright also wished to hold up a mirror up to them, set them thinking about their own situation, and to urge change. For this reason, in the play many of the controversial issues in the Arab community in the Indies were raised, blown up, caricatured, ridiculed, and commented upon.

One of the issues that caused a great deal of controversy was education. Children of Indo-Arab parents usually went to Arab schools, in which lessons were given in Malay and Arabic (the language of their forefathers) or, more often than not, Malay interspersed with occasional Arabic. Already at the beginning of the twentieth century—in particular after the arrival of the modernistic Sudanese teacher Ahmad Soerkati at the invitation of the Arab organization Jamiyat Kheir—serious differences of opinion existed between those who wanted to bring curricula into line with the requirements of the time by introducing subjects as geography, book-keeping, and sports, and those who wanted to carry on in the traditional way. National Arab organizations, such as Rabithah Alawiyah and Al-Irsyad, had their own types of schools and competed with each other through education. Further, most Arab quarters swarmed with small private schools with no more than ten to twenty pupils. If parents did not agree with the program or policy of a certain school, or had a religious or business conflict with the founder or patron, children could easily be sent to another school (De Jonge 2004).[2]

In the second half of the 1930s, these educational conflicts were still going on, as is recalled in the experiences of the character Mochtar in the play. Time

2 See chapter on Abdul Rahman Baswedan in this book.

and again the young teacher is annoyed by the board of governors of his school which consists of powerful but, in the field of education, incompetent members of the local Arab community. They constantly interfere with the content of the courses given and the methods of instruction. Parents had a tendency to impose their views. The consequences of all these contradictory directives on the children were not taken into account.

According to Mochtar, the curriculum of his school does not contain enough subjects to enable the children to get ahead in the world. He criticizes the one-sided emphasis, in which the form is more important than the content, in the training on giving speeches; arguing that the children were being educated to become *mesin bicara* (phonographs): "they all learn to speak very well, without being conscious of what they actually say." He also denounces the distorted picture of historical and social reality that the children obtain through the excessive orientation on Hadhramaut, the homeland of their forefathers. Every morning the school starts with the singing of Hadhramaut Jaa Bila with the opening lines: "Hadhramaut my country, symbol of elevation. Only those who are always guided by you, will gain sway and die in peace." All his pupils, however, were born in Indonesia and have more in common with people from that country than with the inhabitants of Southern Arabia. It is senseless, he argues, to educate them in a tradition to which they hardly belong.

The play also contains an indictment against the lifestyle and mentality of the sons of rich Arab families, as personified in the character of Yusuf: they live off their parents and idle their time away. Nasir, Yusuf's father, calls them "the litter of the world, dressed beautifully on the outside but on the inside full of rot." They have high status, but lack inner civilization and responsibility. They are lazy, arrogant, and feel themselves too important to roll their sleeves up. They lack the willpower and the skills to make successful careers as traders or entrepreneurs.

However, children of poor families also often lacked the work ethic that characterized the first generation of Arab immigrants. These descendants felt embarrassed to make a living as *musafir*, itinerant traders, as their (fore)fathers had done after their arrival in the Indies. Mansur condemns this feigned reluctance, which he sees as a problem common to *muwallad* of all classes:

> They'd rather just sit and do nothing, awaiting their fate or the offer of an important job. They end up having neither a respected position nor the drive for any kind of simple work.

How different, he claims, were the *wulaiti* or the "pure" Arabs who had come to the Indies. These came as poor folk, with nothing, and worked long and hard,

contenting themselves with a "profit of one or two cents." Thanks to their toughness, determination, and fearlessness, they managed to work their way up.

Other Arab writers have also paid attention to the contrast in mentality between *wulaiti* and *muwallad*—between newcomers and Arabs of mixed descent. Baswedan devoted a whole article to this topic in the first issue of *Matahari* in 1934.[3] He attributed the gap to differences in psychological and sociological characteristics between the two groups. Those born in Hadhramaut had grown up in a poor environment in which violence between tribes and families was the order of the day, and where civility and refinement were virtually unheard of. How different the situation was for the *muwallad* in pre-war Indonesia, where ethnic groups, tribes, and families generally lived side-by-side in relative peace. Masculinity, tenacity, and fearlessness were no longer the qualities demanded by the natural and social environment. Baswedan found the *muwallad*, generally speaking, easy-going and light-hearted; they tried to combine business with pleasure and espoused a live-for-the-moment mentality. Baswedan opposed the rigid work morality and uncompromising way of life of the *wulaiti*, which he saw as completely out of place in the tropics. Bafagih was more cautious: he was afraid that the younger generations would relinquish former achievements, and pleads for them to preserve the good qualities of the *wulaiti*.

Another target of criticism in the play is the then practice of contracting one marriage after another purely for sensual pleasure. In particular, young Arab traders who travelled around the archipelago would often stay for a while in one place, where they would rent a house and marry a local girl. From this location they would visit the countryside. When they moved on after a few months or a year, the young wife would be repudiated and replaced by a new one in the next town. Only wives they were fond of were kept. As long as a person had no more than four wives at any one time, it was officially in accordance with religious rules, although many Muslims saw it as against the spirit of their faith.[4]

Children were often born from these short-lived relationships, but the absent fathers usually gave no thought to these descendants, if they were even aware of their birth. In the play, even Nasir, who despised the way of life of the younger generation, had acted so. He had had a sweetheart in every village and every hamlet and had fathered at least thirty children, including the son he was looking for until his death.

3 The article entitled "Peranakan dan totoknya" was several times reprinted, for example in *Insaf*, vol. 4/2–3, 1940, 8–12.

4 Polygamy was more widespread in the *mahjar* (host land) than in Hadhramaut itself. See Van den Berg 1887, 41.

Such marriage practices took place mainly in isolated areas and on the islands. The Dutch civil servant Schrieke found that in Sumenep, the easternmost regency of the island of Madura, Arabs sometimes contracted ten to twelve marriages a year. They had a preference for young girls, still children, whom they knew to still be virgins. Sometimes the children were offered by their parents, who were prepared to pay considerable amounts of money to secure such a relationship. To get a grandchild of an Arab, in particular of a *sayyid*, a descendant of the Prophet himself, was seen as something special. Many Madurese families were prepared to do anything for it, even allowing their daughter "to be locked up in the Arab manner" and, after a month or so, dumped out on the street without a penny. The colonial government tried to clamp down on these undesirable relationships, but was dependent on information from indigenous civil servants and on religious officials who concluded these marriages. The regent of Bangkalan, the western part of the island, had forbidden this type of marriage, but in Sumenep there were even district officers who acted as intermediaries and selected girls for their clients.[5]

One of the most impressive scenes of the play is that in which Yusuf, together with Salim and Umar, visits the Qur'an recitation school of the *lintah darat*, the money-lender, Ammi Ubud, to bargain away the inheritance of Nasir's unknown son. In an original way, it denounces the hypocrisy of the Arab usurers, whose malpractice harms both the members of their own community and those of other population groups.

Usury was seen as a widespread evil among Arabs, and it cast a slur on the whole trading community. In the 1930s, community leaders tried to combat the controversial practice through lectures in the Arab quarters, talks on the radio, and articles in papers and periodicals; but, despite this offensive, it remained an important source of income.[6] In particular, the *wulaiti* were shrewd businessmen who did not recoil from fleecing customers. When a debtor could not pay back a loan, he was squeezed until the creditor eventually got hold of his house and furniture. Arabs also had a bad reputation as landlords of houses and shops in those days. The wealthy, however, had an almost sacrosanct position. By giving donations to Arab organizations, appearing to live piously, and by dedicating themselves to religious causes, they could seemingly redeem their deceitfulness (Maskati 1938; A.S. 1941; Anonim 1941).

5 KITLV, Collectie Westerse Handschriften, H 885, B.J.O. Schrieke (1919).

6 Information M. Asad Shahab, Jakarta.

In the play, this mixture of religiosity and greed is constantly attacked. Both the well-to-do, who show off their piety, and the covetous religious teachers are shown for what they are. At a certain moment, Salim, who lives off Yusuf's money, laments to Umar, the other sponger, that it is not difficult to pass yourself off as a good or religious person, as long as you are rich enough; but if, like themselves you have nothing, you will remain a villain in the eyes of others. Without capital or real estate, he argues, you have no status in Arab circles and thus cannot be devout:

> if we recite holy verses, they say we're 'pretending.' If we pray, they say 'it's about time they repent.' If we're sitting in the mosque, they say 'just putting in an appearance.'

4 Reception

The premiere of *Fatimah*, at the third PAI congress in Semarang in April 1938, was a great success. The spectators, members from all parts of the country, reacted enthusiastically. Many delegates wanted to stage the play in their own district. However, when the PAI branch in Surabaya tried to do just that in August of the same year, prominent Arabs in the city asked the Politieke Inlichtingen Dienst (PID), the Political Intelligence Service, to forbid the performance. They considered the contents of the drama to be insulting to the whole Arab minority in the colony. Among the initial protesters were representatives of Arab organizations and movements such as Al-Irsyad, Al-Khayriya, and Rabithah Alawiyah (even though the last one did not have a branch in Surabaya) as well as the local *kapten Arab*, the head of the local Arab community. After deliberations involving the complainers, the director of the play, and the authorities, only the representatives of Al-Irsyad and Rabithah Alawiyah maintained their opposition. The PID did not object to the substance of the play, but feared disturbances that might spread to other Arab communities, and so set up a commission to eliminate misunderstandings between the different parties involved. Only after this had been achieved would the performance be allowed. The local PAI had no alternative but to cancel the production and to disappoint people who had already bought tickets (Baswedan 1938, 21–22; Fataljaum 1938, 17–20).

The misunderstandings that the authorities had tried to prevent, nevertheless, came about. The ban threw the local Arabs into confusion and, in no time, the whole community in the Indies was in a state of uproar about *Fatimah*. The intensity of the commotion resembled earlier conflicts, such as those about the

privileges of the *sayyid* and the legal classification of the Arabs as so-called Foreign Orientals.[7] Not much was necessary to strain relationships in the relatively small minority.

In particular, it was the *wulaiti* who opposed the staging of *Fatimah*. They felt trampled upon by the contents of the play, which was seen as directed against them. Their criticisms were especially directed against the scenes about usury, about the influence of benefactors on schools, and about the lifestyles of children of the rich. They considered the image that *Fatimah* evoked to not be in accordance with reality, and further that it impugned their honour and tarnished their good name. They could not understand why it was necessary to foul one's own nest. Some argued the play was anti-religious, although this claim was seldom explained. Others thought it a shame that the name of the Prophet's daughter was given to a failure such as this.

The *muwallad* had, generally speaking, no problem with the contents of the play, although quite a number of them, as employees of *wulaiti*, were forced to speak up against the proposed performance by their bosses, for example by signing petitions.

It soon became clear that the protest was aimed not only at *Fatimah*, but also against the PAI. Since its foundation in 1934, it had challenged the all-embracing domination of the *wulaiti* in Arab circles. Although numerically they were a minority (only about 30 percent of the 72,000 Arabs in the Dutch Indies were newcomers at that point), they had a disproportionate influence on the economic, political, and cultural life within the community at large. In movements and organizations such as Al-Khairiyah, Al-Irsyad, and Rabithah Alawiyah, it was they who "were the most visible, fulfilled the leading positions, had power, could say anything, set the course, took decisions and decided about changes" (Fataljaum 1938, 18). Since the emancipation offensive by the PAI, cracks had appeared in this traditional power block, which had led to fierce resentment against the party and its followers. The play provided an opportunity to take revenge and regain lost ground. Just as before, the *wulaiti* tried to achieve their goal through the schools and organizations they controlled, precisely in the way that the play *Fatimah* was highlighting.

The majority of the *wulaiti* were, however, not that familiar with the content of the play. Most of them could not even read the text. Their opinions were based on rumours going around, which increased the animosity. Everywhere the parties involved opposed each other in hostile ways. The conflict drove wedges between families, relatives, neighbours, and friends. The annual

7 For details see chapter I and II.

celebration of Hari Kesadaran, or the "Day of [National] Consciousness", on October 4 in Batavia, when the *muwallad* commemorate that they have chosen Indonesia as their fatherland, threatened to get out of hand because of the provocations by armed anti-PAI youth. Although it did not come to blows, feelings were running so high that the staging of *Fatimah* was impossible for the time being, even in other places than Surabaya.

The PAI was astonished by the fuss the play caused, but was not taken aback by the accusations and hostility. In several periodicals, including *Insaf* and *Aliran Baroe*, a counter-offensive was started. Baswedan wrote that the *wulaiti* did not know anything about theatre and had difficulties in assessing it correctly. The earlier play, *Korban Adat*, performed at the second party congress, had also led to turmoil, although nothing compared with the reactions to *Fatimah* (Bafagih 1939c). Baswedan acknowledged that the drama raised social wrongs in the Arab community, but denied that it was directed against the *wulaiti*, even though they were the ones who often obstructed change. Further, he noted that there were signs that more and more members of Arab organizations, in all corners of the country, were distancing themselves from the official standpoint adopted by the board members, which was seen as inconsistent with the development of the minority and its integration into the wider society. Other writers blamed the *wulaiti*'s conceitedness and lack of self-criticism. It was argued that they looked at everything through Arab glasses and rejected anything that deviated from the culture of their homeland. The PAI urged people not to stir up hatred but to meticulously study the text of *Fatimah*. It was convinced that the critics were mistaken. They believed that, rather than a staging of the play, it would be a ban on the drama that would lead to continuing disturbance in their own circles.

In mid-1939, the Cirebon branch of the PAI tried to stage *Fatimah*. In Surabaya, about eight hundred kilometers to the east, a hue and cry again broke out, and it was predicted that "many trouble-makers and wranglers carrying pistols, swords, and knives will make noise and start riots if *Fatimah* is performed" (Bafagih 1939b, 2). For a second time, the performance was cancelled. A plan for a production in Batavia later that year also seems to have ended in failure. Prominent *wulaiti* even contacted the British consul in the capital to ask him to lodge a protest with the colonial administration on behalf of Great Britain. As subjects of Hadhramaut, which belonged to the British Empire, they considered themselves to be entitled to such protection. However, the consul let them know that he considered the conflict to be an internal question.

In the meantime, more and more leaders and intellectuals were disassociating themselves from the attempts to ban the play. On further consideration, they had come to realize that the problems tackled in the drama deserved the

attention of everybody, and in any case should be subject to discussion. Both Oergoebi, the *kapten* of the Arabs in Batavia, and Abdoellah Badjerei, a member of the General Board of Al-Irsyad, denied publicly that they had expressed anything negative about the play. They asserted that they were misquoted, victims of gossip, and not out to cause dissension. Ahmad Soerkati, at a congress of Al-Irsyad, issued a fatwa advice to the *wulaiti* "not to sow confusion among the members of the PAI, who are nothing else than their children" (Bafagih 1939b, 4). These and other encouraging statements emboldened the PAI and gave it the encouragement it needed.

At the beginning of October 1939, more than a year after the cancellation in Surabaya, *Fatimah* was staged in the Prinsenpark in Batavia under heavy police protection and in the presence of the authorities, Indonesian and Arab members of the *volksraad*, the pseudo-parliament, including Thamrin, Soetardjo, and Oesman Aldjoeffri, members of Arab organizations, including a number of *wulaiti*, and tens of journalists. The performance was a tremendous success and passed off without interruption. Opponents who had never taken full cognizance of the text were touched by the drama, and apologized for their earlier opposition. They felt misled by agitators from their own group. Mohammed Al-Attas, a candidate for the *volksraad*, argued that there should be space in the community for constructive criticism, such as in *Fatimah*. The representatives of Rabithah Alawiyah rejected their original point of view and declared themselves openly in favor of "peace" instead of "war." The very same month the play was staged in Solo and Pekalongan, where it received the same enthusiastic reception. Surabaya, however, remained forbidden ground.

The reaction of the press was predominantly favorable. The Indo-Chinese journal *Keng Po* described *Fatimah* as a striking sketch of the customs and manners of the Indonesian Arabs, including their shortcomings, but that, after all, these exist in every population group. It praised the suggestions the piece contained, not least the call to *muwallad* to see Indonesia as their home nation. *Pewarta Oemoem* regretted that only one performance was given at each location, since the production deserved a much larger audience. *Tjaja Timoer*, which had always been hostile to the PAI, saw no reason to characterize *Fatimah* as an insult towards the Arabs in general or the *wulaiti* in particular, "although it holds a sharp accusation against abuses in the Arab community, these are voiced in a neat and appropriate way." The reviewer Parada Harahap respected the opinions that were presented, although he did not share them all. Like other journalists, he commended the plot, the *mise en scène*, and the players whom he saw as in no way inferior to professional actors. The Malay they spoke on stage was an example to real Indonesians, who seemingly spoke the language less frequently than the Arabs. The newspaper *Pemandangan* wrote

that although Fatimah did not appear in person, it was as if she was constantly present. Harahap said that he would not be at all surprised if the PAI allowed a woman to appear on stage in the near future, and that would be the ending of a real taboo (Harahap 1939; *Teropong journalisten* 1939a, 1939b, 1939c).

Among the *muwallad*, the character Fatimah had become so popular that enterprises and shops, and products such as soap, hair oil, pomade, and eau de cologne, were named after her. A well-known member of PAI in Tretes, near Malang, put her name on his brand-new villa. The famous Indo-Arab singer Abdoellah made an appearance during the play's performance in Solo with a song based on *Fatimah* (Abdullah 1940, 14). An orphanage in Batavia called a girl after her, and she then received toys and handmade clothes from all parts of the country.[8] *Fatimah* had thus become a symbol of identity and emancipation for the *muwallad*.

5 Conclusion

The drama *Fatimah* has played an important role in bringing to an end the relative isolation of the Arabs in the Netherlands East Indies. Through exposing its internal social problems publicly on stage, the emancipation of this inward-looking minority was promoted in a unique way. The content of the play, with its explicitly informative and educational tenor, brought into focus the relationship between conservatives and progressives, a divide which largely mirrored the division between *wulaiti* and *muwallad*. The *wulaiti* saw *Fatimah* as yet another attack on their influential position in the Hadhrami community and an undermining of the norms and values with which they had grown up in Hadhramaut. The *muwallad*, however, saw the drama as confirming the view that was already gaining ground within their circles that the beliefs and behaviour of the *wulaiti* were not fully compatible with the existing mores and way of life in the Indies, the country in which they themselves were born. *Fatimah* made them more aware of their position in the Indies. It encouraged them to free themselves from the ubiquitous dominance of the more traditional *wulaiti* and to strive for their own interests.

M. Asad Shahab, a prominent Arab journalist who well remembered the impact of the play, once said to me that the artistic drama *Fatimah* had preven-

8 See "Villa Fatimah," *Aliran Baroe* (1940) 20: 20. On the child see "Oentoek Fatimah diroemah Pijatoe Moeslimin Batavia-C.," *Aliran Baroe* (1940) 19: 12. Unfortunately, the child died a few months later. See "Fatimah meninggal," *Aliran Baroe*, (1940) 26: 17.

ted the outbreak of a social drama. While that may sound somewhat exaggerated, it does contain an element of truth. The play contributed to the awareness that the Arabs were becoming at odds with a society that was modernizing at a steady pace and, as a result, indirectly furthered the integration of the minority into the wider society.

CHAPTER 6

Selective Accommodation: The Hadhramis in Indonesia during World War II and the Struggle for Independence

Living in diaspora in times of peace is different from living in a host country during wartime, crisis, and political change.* War often forces expatriates to redefine their relationships with their host society. To prevent (further) stigmatization, distrust, or even hostility, they have to find a new balance between their orientation on and commitment to their homeland and their assimilation in and loyalty to the threatened host country.

In this article, I focus on the position of the Hadhramis in the Netherlands East Indies during the Japanese occupation (1942–1945) and the Indonesian struggle for independence (1945–1949). During those years the position of the Hadhramis, or Arabs as they were usually called, was far from enviable. When the Japanese invaded Indonesia, the Hadhramis were part of a colonial society in which they were considered so-called *vreemde oosterlingen* (Foreign Orientals) and, like the Chinese and Indians, occupied an intermediate position between the European colonials and the indigenous population. Although they were dissatisfied with this inferior position and wanted to be placed on a par with the Europeans, their intermediacy had brought them all kinds of advantages, particularly in the economic field. Generally speaking, their relationship with the indigenous population was an ambiguous one: on the one hand, since they originally came from South Arabia, they had an aura of sacredness to the local Muslim population, while on the other hand, these same Indonesians were quite dissatisfied with the Hadhramis' sharp trading practices. Furthermore, well into the 1930s most Hadhramis identified themselves more with their "homeland" Hadhramaut, in the south of present Yemen, than with the colonial society or a future independent Indonesian state. Moreover, the majority of the Indonesian Hadhramis, who throughout the country mostly lived in Arab quarters, chose to main-

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tain some distance between themselves and indigenous Indonesians. Although they earned their living in the Indies, married local women, and preached in local mosques, they preferred living among themselves to merging with the larger society. The more successful and cosmopolitan among them were in close touch with Hadhramis across borders, in Singapore, Penang, and Hadhramaut itself.

The questions I address here include the following: What happened to the Hadhramis during the Japanese occupation and the Indonesian struggle for independence? To what extent were they prepared to comply with the requirements and demands of the Japanese administration? What position did they take *vis-à-vis* the Indonesian republic and toward the returned Dutch? Which forms of cooperation with and resistance to the new power holders came into being? What effect did these events have on their relationship with the Indonesians? And, finally, what were the consequences of the severed relations with Hadhramaut during this period for the diasporic dimensions of the Hadhramis' identity?

1 The Japanese Occupation

The Japanese invasion brought a new social reality: together with the Indonesians the Hadhramis and other Asians of mixed and unmixed descent now found themselves positioned below the Japanese but superior to the Europeans and Eurasians (Touwen-Bouwsma 1997, 37). This did not mean that the Indo-Hadhramis were now considered Indonesians. Just like the Indo-Chinese, they were still considered a separate population group and treated as such. They had to register as non-indigenous inhabitants (and pay for this requirement) and obtain permission to travel or move house. The *wulaiti* were subject to regulations that pertained to foreigners.

Initially, the Japanese regarded the Hadhramis with much distrust. Just like the Dutch, they feared the effects of Pan-Islamic activities and especially the *sayyid*'s religious influence on the local population. Along with other foreign minority schools, the Japanese closed Arab schools and forbade the use of both oral and written Arabic in other schools. In April 1942, private schools were allowed to reopen provided they had a license from the Japanese authorities. The Arab schools, however, had great difficulty in obtaining such permits, as requirements became more and more difficult. According to Harry J. Benda (1958, 127), "The Arab community [...] appears to have offered longer resistance to Japanese educational demands than did most Indonesian Muslims." Surprisingly, the Japanese did not object to four Hadhramis holding seats on

the advisory body of the Majelis Islam A'la Indonesia (MIAI), the Indonesian High Islamic Council, which was allowed to function until the end of 1943. These four included Ahmad Soerkati, the leader of Al-Irsyad, which had founded schools all over the country, and Habib Ali bin Abdurrahman al-Habsyi, imam of the Kwitang Mosque in Jakarta, where many Hadhramis prayed.

The new Japanese military government also forbade all political parties and organizations whose activities had political implications. This meant that the PAI was dissolved and that social associations, like Al-Irsyad, or class-based organizations, such as Rabithah Alawiyah, which only furthered the interests of the *sayyid* had to stay away from politics. It did not imply, however, the end of the PAI's philosophy. The former leaders continued their mission informally, as many Indo-Hadhramis still had to be convinced of their "Indonesianness." They also tried as far as possible to show the world around them that they considered themselves to be Indonesians, in the hope that the Japanese would change their attitude toward them and eventually treat them the same way as they did the indigenous people.

Distrust of the Hadhramis had also to do with their way of doing business. They attempted to evade posted prohibitions on a large scale, such as hoarding goods, handling stolen and forbidden articles, and ignoring fixed prices and prescribed quota's, often at the expense of those both within and outside their own circles.[1] Quite a few Hadhrami traders were fined for hoarding rice, soap, and yarn for weaving or for selling these at higher prices than allowed. Many shopkeepers and money-lenders supplemented their income by trading in jewelry and second-hand goods, such as furniture and clothing, that they had bought below the market price or received as security for a loan, mainly from Europeans or Chinese. A significant number of them did not hesitate to trade in looted goods. At one point Hadhrami community leaders in Semarang and Surabaya felt obliged to ask the *orang mindring* to stop collecting interest or even to take over debts.[2] In Pekalongan, a Hadhrami took an oath on behalf of local traders that they would obey the rules.[3] Just like elsewhere in those uncertain days, corruption and swindling were present among the Hadhramis,

1 "Ditoedoeh menjimpan atau membeli barang2 rampokan," *Tjahaja*, 26 August 1942; "Pentjoerian barang2 kain seharga f 1000," *Tjahaja*, 8 September 1942; "Pembeslahan barang2 di toko Arab," *Pewarta Perniagaan*, 23 September 1942; "Menaikan harga di denda f 5000," *Pewarta Perniagaan*, 26 February 1943; "Kepala bangsa Arab ditahan," *Pewarta Perniagaan*, 21 April 1943.

2 "Panitya Oeroesan Bangsa Arab," *Soeara Asia*, 19 July 1944.

3 "Kaoem dagang bersoempah," *Tjahaja*, 13 March 1943.

although according to the Japanese, Hadhramis were worse than other traders. As early as September 1942, the army authorities in Jakarta published a declaration that read:

> Recently there have been members of population groups around the capital who do not comply with orders, in particular Arabs, who profit from the weak position of persons who find it difficult to make a living.[4]

The Japanese did not keep their reservations about the Hadhramis a secret. Time and again the state-controlled Indonesian daily *Asia Raya* reviled them publicly for their tendency to stay aloof from developments in the wider society, for looking out for only their own interests, for backing out of their obligations, for their supercilious attitude toward other population groups, and for not ending the dissension in their own circles. These accusations caused resentment and concern among many Hadhramis, both *muwallad* and *wulaiti*, who were oblivious of any wrongdoing and as a result isolated themselves even further.[5]

Despite the mutual mistrust between Hadhramis and Japanese, there was occasional outright collaboration. For example, the Arab textile industry in Java was severely hampered by the obligatory registration and control of stocks of cloth and yarn, as well as the prohibition on producing garments without permission from the Japanese authorities. Many establishments ceased production because of the measures of the Tekisan Kanribu, the Enemy Property Management Department. A small number, however, survived by accepting orders from the Japanese government or by bribing Japanese officials.[6] Hadhramis also used the Japanese to improve their own position and to settle scores with rivals or enemies. The Hadhrami minority in Semarang, for example, became divided when a pro-Japanese member betrayed alleged pro-Dutch Arabs to the Kempeitai, the Japanese military police, including the pre-war head of the local community, who was accused of possessing British war propaganda material. This Japanese sympathizer and a few accomplices used their influence to extort money and goods from their opponents.[7]

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4 *Pengoemoeman Gunseikanbu*, 2 September 1942.

5 "Satoe warna, satoe bangsa," *Kalimantan Raya*, 22 June 1942; A.S. Alatas, "Pendjelasan sikap kita," *Asia Raya*, 20 November 1943.

6 Nationaal Archief, The Hague (henceforth NA), Inventaris Procureur-Generaal bij het Hooggerechtshof van Nederlands-Indië, 1945–1950, nummer toegang 2.10.17, bestanddeel 172.

7 NA, Inventaris Procureur-Generaal bij het Hooggerechtshof van Nederlands-Indië, 1945–1950, nummer toegang 2.10.17, bestanddeel 667.

During the first one and a half years, the Japanese had no reason to change their policy toward the foreign Asians and particularly the Hadhramis. Only at the end of 1943 did they relax their attitude toward these groups somewhat, presumably because by then they had come to better understand the place and nature of these minorities and did not want to become too alienated from them. After all, they needed as much support as possible for the struggle in Greater Asia—monetary, moral, and physical. Besides, they could not do without the traders, producers, and well-to-do among these minorities to maintain the war effort. On their part, several Hadhrami leaders also considered an improvement of relations necessary, first of all to prevent a further stigmatization of their group, about whom the Japanese reported to only hear "bad news about their behaviour and attitudes."[8] Second, these leaders wanted to stimulate economic activities in Hadhrami circles and raise the general standard of living. Particularly the aged, the sick, and the unemployed among them had become unable to support themselves and were dependent on relief distributions of money, food, and clothes that were started in almost every Hadhrami community.

This opportunistic rapprochement soon yielded some practical results for both parties. Before the end of 1943, the Indo-Hadhramis no longer needed permits to travel, just like the Indo-Chinese, and were allowed to obtain loans again from the Shomin Ginko, the former Volkscredietbank (People's Bank).[9] Moreover, they were now able to withdraw up to 30 percent of their blocked savings from so-called hostile Dutch or Chinese banks.[10] The Hadhrami communities responded by collecting money for *heiho*, auxiliary soldiers, the vigilance corps Keibodan, as well as for the military youth organization Seinendan and the voluntary army Pembela Tanah Air (PETA; Defenders of the Fatherland), who were to assist the Japanese in facing an Allied invasion.[11] Although they were not yet allowed to participate actively, they could show their support for the war by making donations to the so-called Badan Pembantoe Pradjoerit (Military Support Funds) that were started for this purpose in all cities with a considerable Hadhrami population. Wealthy shop owners and mer-

8 "Semangat baroe dari kalangan Arab," *Asia Raya*, 22 November 1942.

9 "Syomin Ginko djoega memindjamkan oeang kepada bangsa Tionghoa, Arab dan India," *Soeara Asia*, 14 October 1943.

10 "Wang simpanan rakjat Djawa soedah moelai diambil kembali," *Kita Sumatora Sinbun*, 2 November 1943.

11 A.S. Alatas, "Seroean pada golongan Arab," *Asia Raya*, 15 November 1943; "f 20.000 dari golongan Arab," *Asia Raya*, 19 November 1943; "Bantoean golongan Arab oentoek Barisan Pembela Tanah Air," *Asia Raya*, 20 November 1943; "Oentoek Tentara Pembela Tanah Air," *Soeara Asia*, 22 November 1943.

chants in Jakarta donated 9,000 guilders, while the Hadhramis in Madura raised 835 guilders.[12]

From March 1944 on, leading figures within the Arab community were invited to participate in newly created advisory bodies, such as the Djawa Hokokai, the Java Service Association, and the Arabujin Shido Iinka, the Arab Guidance Committees.[13] Not everyone was prepared to do so, however. As is common in war situations, there were differences in opinion about cooperating with the occupiers. For example, A.S. Alatas, who was a former member of the *volksraad* and highly esteemed, chose to cooperate closely with the Japanese. According to Kazuhiro Arai (2004, 330–336), he translated the proclamation of the Japanese occupation into Indonesian and worked at the administration of *Asia Raya* during the whole war period. He occasionally contributed an article to this newspaper in which he called on his Hadhrami compatriots to help the Japanese government achieve the final victory. By contrast, Hamid Algadri, one of the former leaders of the outlawed PAI, joined the anti-Japanese movement led first by Amir Sjarifoeddin and, after his arrest, by Sutan Sjahrir, later the first prime minister of the revolutionary Republic of Indonesia. Others were prepared to cooperate to some extent with the Japanese, not out of pro-Japanese sentiments, but because it allowed them to do something for their fellow Hadhramis. This latter group included PAI founder A.R. Baswedan, who was on friendly terms with the leader of the Indonesian independence movement Sukarno (De Jonge 2004, 389–391).[14] At Sukarno's request, he became involved in the activities of Djawa Hokokai. This organization was the Japanese' third attempt to increase the Indonesians' enthusiasm for the concept of a Greater East Asian Co-Prosperity Sphere and to stimulate them to support and contribute to the Asia Pacific war. Two earlier mass organizations led by Indonesian nationalists, the Gerakan Tiga A (Triple A Movement), which emphasized Japan's role as leader, protector, and light of Asia, and the Poetera (Poesat Tenaga Rakyat, or Concentration of Peoples' Power), failed and were dissolved. This time the Japanese took the reins themselves. Significantly, the former propaganda organizations had not been open to members of the Indo-Arab communities.

12 "Sokongan hartawan bangsa Arab di Djakarta," *Pembangoen*, 27 November 1943; "Seroean kepada pendoedoek Arab," *Pembangoen*, 30 November 1943; "Bantoean oentoek Barisan Pembela Tanah Air," *Soeara Asia*, 27 November 1943; "Sekitar Tentara Pembela Tanah Air," *Sinar Matahari*, 27 November 1943.

13 "Djawa Hokokai (Himpoenan Kebaktian Rakjat)," *Sinar Matahari*, 9 February 1944; A.S. Alatas, "Bangsa Arab dalam Djawa Hokokai," *Asia Raya*, 14 February 1944.

14 See chapter III.

In the Hokokai, Baswedan organized courses on topics like history and nationalism. He persuaded Sukarno to teach a course especially for the Hadhrami youth in Jakarta to broaden their historical and social knowledge.[15] His position in the propaganda machinery made it possible for him to visit all Hadhrami communities and, using pro-Japanese rhetoric as a cover, fight for the ideals of the former PAI. Emphasizing both orally and in writing that the Indo-Hadhramis were born and raised in Indonesia, would be buried there, and had much more in common with the native population than they were ready to admit, he contributed like nobody else to their conception of themselves as Indonesians.

Leaders like Baswedan and Alatas, who were trusted by the Japanese and Sukarno *cum suis*, to a certain extent were in a better position than the *kapten Arab*, the community heads who had mostly been appointed before the war. Charged with managing daily community affairs and with implementing new policies, they were in the unenviable position of having to find a precarious balance between the expectations of the Japanese authorities and the aversion, not to say antagonism, of the people to those expectations. Despite or perhaps because of the ambiguity of their position, they were often very creative in alternately deceiving and flattering the Japanese.

This flattery reached new heights during the summer of 1944, when in July the Indo-Hadhramis were explicitly classified as Indonesians and when, in September, Tokyo announced it was considering giving Indonesia its independence in the near future.[16] With both moves, the Japanese hoped to gain greater support among the Indonesians generally and reverse their fortunes in war. Notes of thanks were sent to the military government in Jakarta from all Hadhrami quarters in Indonesia. Over the next few months Panitia Bangsa Arab or Panitia Golongan Arab, Arab committees, were founded in almost all cities in Java to increase Arab participation in transforming Java into an unconquerable fort. Baswedan preferred the word *golongan* (group) to *bangsa* (people), as the Hadhramis were now placed on a par with the indigenous population. At the same time, a fund drive was held in Java to offer the Japanese

15 "Pemoeda2 Arab dan soal Indonesia Merdeka," *Asia Raya*, 29 May 1945.

16 "Memperlakoekan bangsa Arab sebagai bangsa Indonesia," *Asia Raya*, 1 August 1944; "Bangsa Arab kelak akan moelia djoega. Setialah kepada Pemerintah Balatentera," *Asia Raya*, 3 August 1944; "Segenap lapisan rakyat Besoeki Shuu membaharoei niatnja," *Asia Raya*, 26 September 1944; "Terhadap pengoemoeman Gunseikanbu tentang memperlakoekan bangsa Arab," *Sinar Baroe*, 2 August 1944; "Bangsa Arab di Djawa diakoei sebahagian pendoedoek Djawa," *Atjeh Sinbun*, 5 August 1944; "Pendoedoek Arab toeroet bergembira," *Sinar Baroe*, 10 September 1944; "Bangsa Arab menjamboet poetoesan Pemerintah dengan gembira," *Tjahaja*, 3 August 1944.

army a plane on behalf of people of Hadhrami descent for the *perang suci*, the "holy war," against the Allied forces. Five months later, fifty thousand persons had contributed 250,000 guilders to be handed over to the Japanese army.[17] In every city, volunteers began to collect old iron, platinum, diamonds, and other jewels to support the war effort.[18] In Jakarta alone, metals worth 36,000 guilders were donated, and in Surabaya 4,410 jewels were contributed.[19] One wealthy person donated the iron fence surrounding his property. Here and there so-called Badan Pembantoe Pradjoerit dan Pekerdja (Soldiers' and Workers' Support Units) sprang up that recruited youths and collected money for *heiho* and organizations like PETA, and Keibodan.[20] From then on, all Indonesian organizations were open to Indo-Hadhramis. Some youths in Pekalongan and neighbouring towns even registered to join suicide corps, such as the Barisan Jibaku (Human Torpedo), the Barisan Kamikaze, and the Barisan Berani Mati (Dare to Die).[21] Sukarno selected three Hadhramis for his Barisan Pelopor Istimewa, or Special Vanguard Troops.[22] However, this willingness to join the Indonesian militia was not as great as Arab circles at the time often claimed. The number of volunteers in different Arab quarters mentioned in newspapers does not indicate an excessive desire to fight together with the Japanese. As a resident of Kota Radja in Aceh aptly said:

> It is true, we Hadhramis do not participate in this war, but we have to join in too, although not in the front line, it is in the rear that we have to be ready.[23]

Most Hadhramis kept a low profile and restricted themselves to making the necessary contributions and paying lip service. The majority, apparently well satisfied with the new equality and the political prospects, continued to exercise restraint.

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17 "Pendoedoek Arab menjoembangkan f 250.000," *Sinar Baroe*, 11 December 1944.

18 "Pendoedoek Arab berbakti," *Soeara Asia*, 20 December 1944.

19 "Oesaha mengoempoelkan besi toeah," *Soeara Asia*, 5 March 1944; "Pendoedoek Arab mengoempoelkan intan dan platina," *Soeara Asia*, 28 December 1944; "Oesaha pendoedoek Arab Jakarta," *Soeara Asia*, 1 February 1945.

20 "Oesaha pendoedoek Arab," *Asia Raya*, 22 December 1944; "200 Pemoeda Tionghoa sanggoep 'berjibaku'. Pendoedoek Arab dan Peranakan poen tidak maoe ketinggalan," *Soeara Asia*, 22 December 1944.

21 "Oesaha pendoedoek Arab," *Asia Raya*, 22 December 1944; "200 Pemoeda Tionghoa sanggoep 'berjibaku'. Pendoedoek Arab dan Peranakan poen tidak maoe ketinggalan," *Soeara Asia*, 22 December 1944.

22 "Pernjataan pemoeda Arab pada Ir. Soekarno Chuuoo Honbuchoo," *Asia Raya*, 27 November 1944; "Koersoes pemoeda Arab," *Asia Raya*, 19 December 1944.

23 "Perhatian dari bangsa Arab di Koetaradja kepada Pe.T.A.," *Atjeh Sinbun*, 28 June 1944.

In February 1945 the Japanese appointed Baswedan as the Hadhrami representative to the Chuo Sangiin, the Central Advisory Council.[24] This council had been established a year earlier to make recommendations to the military administration for improving its relationship with the people of Indonesia and for the "upgrading of the cultural standard of the population, the education, the economy, the social welfare and public health" (De Jong 1985, 905). It was the first time that a Hadhrami had been allowed to participate in the highest representative body for non-Japanese (the Chinese had had five representatives from the start). Fully in accordance with his political views, Baswedan stated during his visits to Hadhrami communities that he saw himself as a representative of Indonesian society generally rather than of the Arabs specifically. In May 1945 he became a member of the Research Commission for the Preparation of Independence (BPUPK; Badan Penyelidik Usaha-usaha Persiapan Kemerdekaan).[25] Here he expressed his concerns about the future social and legal position of the Hadhramis in an independent Indonesia. Although the war years had contributed greatly to their self-awareness as Indonesians, he realized that the majority of indigenous Indonesians were hardly cognizant of this. They were not interested in the minority's concerns, because they had their own troubles making a living and were not aware of great changes in their relationships with Hadhramis. The mission of the former PAI leaders had been an internal Hadhrami affair. Most Indonesians still saw them as relative outsiders, despite similarities in religion, kinship relations, and shared historical experiences. Only the nationalist leaders were well informed about what had taken place in this small minority community.

2 Revolutionary Years

After the Japanese capitulation on 15 August 1945, it soon became clear that official confirmation of equal rights for Indo-Hadhramis and Indonesians did not have the highest priority, either in the new Indonesian republic that had been proclaimed on 17 August or in the areas controlled by the British army and, later, the returned Dutch. Nevertheless both competing governments held out the prospect for Indonesian and other Foreign Oriental groups' recognition as equals. Apparently this prospect did not dissuade the Hadhramis from dedicating themselves to their new fatherland. In December 1945 H.J. van Mook,

24 "Sekitar pengangkatan Giin Chuuoo Sangi-In dari kalangan Arab," *Sinar Baroe*, 16 February 1945.

25 "Pemoeda2 Arab dan soal Indonesia Merdeka," *Asia Raya*, 29 May 1945.

the highest Dutch authority in the Netherlands East Indies, sent a telegram to J.H.A. Logemann, the Minister of Overseas Territories in The Hague, about the attitude of the Hadhramis, saying that:

> A gradual loss of confidence in Dutch power and rash actions by the Republicans have brought all Arabs into the Republican camp. Considering that Arabs are very sensitive to displays of strength and courage, be advised that the Arab youth is completely in the ban of the fanatical struggle for independence conducted by Indonesian youths.[26]

As a ray of hope, he also mentioned that they were not averse to taking a wait-and-see position.

This observation by Van Mook was astute, because the more the Dutch were able to consolidate their administrative, economic, and military position and create order in the non-republican areas, the more the Hadhramis shifted their views and loyalties. Although the dearly won Indonesian identity was not under debate, there were differences in opinion about the future form of the new Indonesian state and the eventual political role of the Hadhramis in it. Roughly speaking, most adherents to the philosophy of the old PAI argued in favour of the Republic of Indonesia and were for joining Indonesian political parties and societal organizations based on personal preference. The greater part of the former PAI opponents preferred an autonomous United States of Indonesia within the Kingdom of the Netherlands and the formation of pure Indo-Hadhrami political parties and social associations. Among the latter group were quite a number of well-off persons and their followers, who thought that their economic interests would be better served in such a construction. Many *wulaiti* favored it as well. A considerable portion of the Hadhramis, however, kept silent and waited to see which way the wind blew in the struggle for independence and the negotiations between the Indonesians and the Dutch.

This disunity resulted in the establishment of a variety of national and local Hadhrami parties and associations.[27] Most of them, such as the Komite Pembela Kepentingan Arab (Committee for the Defense of Arab Interest), the Partai

26 Nationaal Archief, The Hague (henceforth NA), Inventaris Algemene Secretarie van de Nederlands-Indische Regering en de daarbij gedeponeerde Archieven, 1942–1950, nummer toegang 2.10.14, bestanddeel 2745.

27 NA, Inventaris Procureur-Generaal bij het Hooggerechtshof van Nederlands-Indië, 1945–1950, nummer toegang 2.10.17, bestanddeel 667.

Nasional Toeroenan Arab (National Party of Arab Descendants) from Palembang, the Pemoeda Arab Peranakan (Indo-Arab Youth), the Partai Warga Negara Arab Indonesia (Indonesian Party of Arab Citizens) from Makassar, the Partai Politik Arab Indonesia (Political Party of Indonesian Arabs), and the Arab committees, founded during the Japanese period, more or less openly sided with the republic. A few, like the Al-Djamijah Al-Arabijah Al-Chairijah (Arabic Charitable Committee) and the revived pre-war Indo-Arabische Beweging (Indo-Arab Movement) of Mohammad al-Amoedi, who had cooperated closely with the Japanese, were pro-Dutch and favoured a federal Indonesia. Other organizations, including the Wihdatoel Sjababoel Arabi (Union of Young Arabs) sat on the fence and waited to see the outcome of the confrontation between the Indonesian and Dutch armies and diplomatic delegations. In some places, Indo-Hadhramis joined youth groups, though not on the scale that Van Mook had thought, while their wealthy elders supported the struggle for independence, sometimes pressured by republican leaders. Both Sjahrir, the first republican prime minister (1946–1947), and Mohammad Natsir, the minister of information (1946–1947)—the first a socialist and the second a member of the Islamic Masjumi party—invited "hesitant" Hadhrami leaders to their house to gauge "their favourable inclination towards the republic."[28] Especially Sjahrir, who had adopted two Hadhrami boys and a girl during his pre-war internment on Banda by the Dutch, was a highly esteemed politician in Hadhrami circles. Hadhrami support could not be taken for granted, however, as is clear from the kidnapping of alleged Hadhrami opponents by supporters of the republic. Not rarely, ordinary people lumped the Hadhramis with people of Manadonese, Chinese, and Ambonese backgrounds, who were known to be pro-Dutch.[29] On the island of Madura, Hadhramis and Chinese were driven away and their shops sacked and set afire.[30] This also happened in Ajibarang, near Purwokerto.[31] In some cases, tactless actions by Indonesian youth troops and republican authorities, like obstructing the return of Hadhrami refugees from Surabaya who had fled to the countryside, also damaged the republican reputation.[32]

In 1946 the Dutch organized a conference in Pangkalpinang on Bangka of representatives of foreign minorities in an attempt to win them over to the

28 NA, Inventaris Algemene Secretarie van de Nederlands-Indische Regering en de daarbij gedeponeerde Archieven, 1942–1950, nummer toegang 2.10.14, bestanddeel 2745.

29 "Dalam negeri," *Persatoean*, 16 April 1946.

30 "Pendoedoek Tionghoa di Madoera," *Soeloeh Ra'jat*, 16 August 1947.

31 "Penderita'an Tionghoa dan Arab," *Soeloeh Ra'jat*, 27 September 1947.

32 "Pengoengsi2 Arab dari daerah pedalaman," *Soeloeh Ra'jat*, 23 October 1946.

Dutch position. Dissension arose within the Hadhrami community regarding the selection of delegates, who were not seen as representative of the whole community. Early in 1948, after the Renville Agreement, the second political agreement between the Dutch and Indonesian republic, the Komite Politik Kalangan Arab (Political Committee of the Arab Groups) was formed to reach a consensus among the Hadhramis and more consistently defend their interests.[33] It was made up of representatives from the country's most important Hadhrami organizations. Within this committee, the progressive nationalists, adherents of the republic, gradually shaped the discourse on the position that Hadhramis should take in negotiations about Indonesia's future.

In the meantime, Baswedan and Algadri had become members of the Komite Nasional Indonesia Pusat (KNIP; Central Indonesian National Committee) of the Republic of Indonesia that was established on 19 August 1945. It consisted of "outstanding Indonesian nationalists and the most important leaders of the chief ethnic, religious, social, and economic groups in Indonesia" (McTurnan Kahin 1952, 140). Initially an advisory body, it soon was transformed into a provisional parliament that shared full legislative powers with President Sukarno. From October 1946 to July 1947, Baswedan was deputy minister of information in the Third Sjahrir Cabinet, in which position he contributed to the recognition of the new republic by the Arab League.

It is ironic to note that both the Dutch and the Indonesian republicans once again drove a wedge between the Foreign Orientals and the Indonesians. After the war, the Dutch had opted for a federal state, in which the peoples of islands outside Java and the Asian minorities would have a greater say than before. They began to create a number of pro-Dutch states and, at the same time, tried to overthrow the republic (which was restricted to Central and part of East Java) by two intimidating military actions in 1947 and 1948. Their divide-and-rule policy, in particular the promise that in the future the Asian minorities would have more influence, served to increase the distance between Indonesians and hesitant Indo-Hadhramis. Although the republican authorities knew that the Hadhramis wanted to be considered and treated like Indonesians, they actually, to some degree, copied the approach of the colonial powers, even against their own better judgment. Instead of accepting them publicly as compatriots, they treated them as outsiders, in this case by recruiting Hadhramis as representatives of their minority in republican organizations. They appointed Algadri and Baswedan to represent and gain the support of the Hadhrami community, even

33 The agreement, concluded in Batavia aboard the American naval vessel *Renville*, implied a military truce and recognition of each other's territory. It did not hold long and was violated by both parties.

though these two wanted to eliminate the distinction between their followers and Indonesians. The only reasons for this in my opinion could be that they underestimated the general Hadhrami "sense of belonging" or that they did not want to alienate the men with capital, a minority within the community who mainly favored a distinct Hadhrami presentation.

In one respect, the Hadhramis in the republican areas did not differ that much anymore from their Indonesian neighbours. The struggle for independence had further aggravated the situation of large numbers of both indigenous Indonesians and Hadhramis. By the end of 1948, almost one-third of the thirty-five hundred inhabitants of Hadhrami origin in Surakarta (Solo) were dependent on relief and support from their better-off local compatriots. There was an alarming shortage of food and only the well-to-do could boast a week's supply of rice. Shops were virtually empty and because of a shortage of raw materials only a few of the seventy batik workshops and eleven weaving mills were in operation. One positive aspect of life in the local Hadhrami community was that the Arab schools were open.[34]

After the transfer of sovereignty to an independent Indonesia in 1949, an overwhelming majority of the Indo-Hadhramis opted for Indonesian citizenship, although for many years to come their position remained judicially and constitutionally anomalous. To their regret and indignation, they, together with Indo-Chinese and Eurasians who decided to stay on, had the phrase *bukan asli* (not indigenous) added to their registration cards.[35] Many *wulaiti* decided to stay on as well, for the time being as "accepted" foreigners. During the war and revolutionary period, they had lost contact with their relatives in Hadhramaut and had been unable to send remittances. Owing to the loss of income, hundreds in their homeland had died in the famines of 1943 and 1945. According to an article in a Sumatran paper in June 1944, no ships had entered the harbors of Ash Shihr and Al Mukalla on the Arabian South Coast for more than two years.[36] After the war, the Dutch Indies government forbade repatriates to take along more than 250 guilders per person or 500 guilders per family or send more than 30 guilders a month to first-and second-degree relatives. Additional money transfers were subject to approval of the Nederlands-Indische Deviezen Instituut (Foreign Exchange Control) which in each case sought the advice of a commission of three prominent Hadhramis. In its early years the

34 NA, Inventaris Algemene Secretarie van de Nederlands-Indische Regering en de daarbij gedeponeerde Archieven, 1942–1950, nummer toegang 2.10.14, bestanddeel 3398.

35 Officially this situation continued until 2006, when by law (UU nomor 12, 2006) the distinction between *asli* and *bukan asli* was abolished.

36 "Bahaja kelaparan di Hadramaut," *Kita Sumatora Sinbun*, 6 June 1944.

Indonesian republic completely outlawed the sending of remittances, although later this policy was reversed. Many *wulaiti* feared that if they left the country, they would never be permitted to come back. Visits to their homeland also became more difficult in the 1950s when a struggle for independence started in the British Crown colony Aden and the adjacent protectorate to which Hadhramaut belonged. Passenger traffic between Indonesia and Hadhramaut came to a standstill in 1969, two years after South Yemen became independent, when a radical wing of the National Liberation Front established a Marxist regime there. Only in 1990, after the unification of South and North Yemen, was contact between Indonesia and the homeland of the Indonesian Hadhrami restored.

3 Concluding Remarks

The Japanese occupation and the revolutionary period brought about radical changes among the Hadhramis in Indonesia. During this time, they changed from being an inward-looking minority of relative outsiders focused on their mystical homeland of Hadhramaut into a more open community that identified itself emphatically with its host country of Indonesia. The seeds for this development, which challenged the community's internal social hierarchy and furthered its awareness of being Indonesian, were sown in the mid-1930s but only came to fruition during the successive war periods. The Japanese occupation and the struggle for independence in fact increased the pace of a process that had started earlier. The circumstances under which this process took place were at first sight more discouraging than encouraging, not only because of the war, but also owing to the distrust with which successive power holders viewed the Hadhrami minority and the discrimination that resulted from this attitude. Just like the pre-World War II Dutch administration, the Japanese military government was suspicious of the Hadhramis, imposing restrictions on them and initially classifying them as second-class citizens, be it now below the Indonesians rather than below the Dutch. Only in mid-1943 when they gained the same rights as Indonesians did cooperation between Hadhrami leaders and the Japanese authorities increase, although both parties were primarily protecting their own interests. Like no other foreign minority, the Hadhrami nationalists seized the opportunity to realize their goals. They profited not only from the equalization but also from the fact that those Hadhramis who opposed their mission were effectively silenced, as the latter's view did not suit Japanese interests. This unintentional room for maneuver was the only thing for which this progressive vanguard was thankful to the Japanese. Generally speaking, the

Hadhramis wanted little to do with the new administration, trying as much as possible to avoid Japanese officials, making the best of things, and waiting for better times.

After the proclamation of Indonesian independence, the republican government unexpectedly reversed the equalization of the Hadhramis with the indigenous population. It wanted to treat all foreign Asian minorities, the Indo-Chinese, Indo-Hadhramis, and Indo-Europeans, in the same way. This decision was not received with favour by Hadhrami leaders, who before and during the Japanese occupation had sided with the Indonesian nationalists. For the Hadhrami community generally as well, the legal downgrading was a bitter disappointment. But there was no way back. After the Japanese capitulation, the Indo-Hadhramis knew where they belonged, a stand that did not change during the revolutionary years. Even many *wulaiti* preferred to stay in Indonesia instead of going back to Hadhramaut. There was internal discord after independence, to be sure, but this conflict had mainly to do with the nature of the new state and their place in it, not with whether they were to be Indonesians. Many asked themselves in what type of state, form of government, and constitution their interests would be best guaranteed. For that reason, quite a few Hadramis preferred a state in which the Dutch would continue to play a dominant role and a constitution in which their rights were exactly stipulated. The majority, however, sooner or later chose to support the Indonesian republic.

A remarkable characteristic of this process of Indonesianization is that it was almost completely an internal Hadhrami affair, just like the small emancipatory steps during the 1920s. It did not take place in open dialogue with the wider Indonesian society, although pre-war nationalist movements in Indonesian and other Foreign Oriental circles doubtlessly inspired it. Their Indonesianization appeared as if it had nothing to do with the indigenous Indonesians, who were uninvolved or even unaware of the changes that were taking place. During the late colonial period, the Japanese occupation, and the early years of independence, the intrinsic nature of the relationship between the Hadhramis and members of other population groups hardly changed at all. The contacts between them were primarily economic, marked by the same social and cultural distance as before. The only ones who were aware of the internal changes within the minority and the "rapprochement" with Indonesia and Indonesians were Indonesian nationalist leaders like Sukarno and Sjahrir. It is not surprising, therefore, that after independence indigenous Indonesians continued to perceive the Hadhramis as relative outsiders, despite the fact they were Muslims, just like the majority of the Indonesians. Both the government's minorities policy and the attitude of the larger population complicated the integration of the Hadhramis. They also felt treated unfairly, being, for example,

ineligible for the financial support that was available to indigenous entrepreneurs or not being allowed to become members of cooperatives or buy land (De Jonge 2005, 219). However, this in no way threatened the mental process of conversion from Arab to Indonesian they went through.

To be precise, their newly obtained identity did not mean that the Indo-Hadhramis no longer wanted to differentiate themselves somewhat from the indigenous Indonesian peoples. They were proud of their Hadhrami origin and to varying degrees continued to cherish their ancestral customs and values. Also, turning away from Hadhramaut as a fatherland did not mean a total breach with the past. Rather, the culture and history of their forebearers now had a new, less threatening or dominant place in their lives, a place more attuned to the demands of the time and existing social conditions.

CHAPTER 7

Contradictory and against the Grain: Snouck Hurgronje on the Hadhramis in the Dutch East Indies (1889–1936)

The famous Dutch orientalist C. Snouck Hurgronje (1857–1936) was professional adviser for Islamic affairs from 1889 until 1906 for the colonial government in Batavia.* He lived continuously in the Dutch East Indies for those seventeen years and provided requested as well as volunteered advice to the Governor-General, the directors of the departments for justice, home affairs as well as that for education, public worship and industry and to Residents and other higher authorities. The subjects about which he offered advice varied from disputes about mosques, religious jurisdiction, political-religious pamphlets, the hajj, amulets, Muslim leaders, to mystical orders, religiously suspect persons, and hostilities against the Dutch under the banner of Islam in Aceh and other areas. Besides giving advice and drawing up reports, Snouck was also engaged in scientific activities. Studies such as *De Atjèhers* (1893–1894) and *Het Gajoland en zijne bewoners* (1903) give testimony to this. When he collected data, the political and scientific ends were often confused. Also in publications and advice, the line between science and politics was not always sharply drawn. In fact, *De Atjèhers* was a considerably enlarged version of a report Snouck wrote for the colonial government in 1882. The study of Gajo, that lay within the sphere of influence of Aceh, was a sequel to a "concise note" with "provisional hints for visitors," that is military men and civil servants (Gobée and Adriaanse 1957–1965, I: 370). Both books were published "by order of the government" and printed by the Landsdrukkerij (national printing-house). It is not without reason that Kommers (1996, 97) calls *De Atjèhers* an "ethnography for use" (*gebruiksetnografie*), an ethnography that also had a practical meaning. This qualification applies equally true for the study about the inhabitants of Gajo.[1]

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1 In 1885 he writes from Jeddah to Nöldeke that the main goal of his stay there is to "study the Islam from the life; the observation, thus, of the thinking and doing of the scholars and unlearned in a center of Mohammedan life; of the influence that this center has on all parts of the earth where believers live—especially as I am a Dutchman and by no means despise of *practical science* [my italics], the significant influences here which are felt in the East Indies" (Van Koningsveld 1985b: 10).

In 1906, during his first leave, Snouck was asked to consider becoming professor in Arabic in Leiden. He accepted the position on the condition that he be allowed to keep his advisory duties (Gobée and Adriaanse 1957–1965, I: xiv–xv). Apparently, he had become attached to the Indies (where he also secretly had founded a family) and did not want to give up the possibility of being able to return there. However, he never made use of that provision. He lived up to his reputation as a researcher and had less and less time for extra duties. Nevertheless, he continued to give comments on political-Islamic matters in the Indies and the Arab world to the end of his life; increasingly to the Secretary for the Colonies in The Hague and less frequently to authorities in the Indies itself.

In this article I want to pay attention to what Snouck Hurgronje has written as an adviser and scholar about the Hadhramis in the Dutch East Indies and to how he has written about this group of people.[2] Since the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869, the influx of inhabitants from the poor and isolated Hadhramaut had drastically increased. When Snouck lived in Batavia, each year hundreds of Hadhrami immigrants arrived in the Indonesian archipelago; some temporarily, others to stay permanently. Although their numbers paled into insignificance when compared with the number of Chinese immigrants, the colonial administration was more worried about their arrival than that of the latter. In particular, their presumed influence on the process of Islamization caused continuous anxiety. Snouck seemed to be the right person to inform the colonial government about this group. He spoke Arabic, was familiar with the Arab culture, and was, as a result of a former stay in Mecca and Jeddah, well informed on the nature of the relationships which existed between inhabitants of the Arabian peninsula and the Indonesian archipelago. As an Arabist, Snouck himself was most interested in this minority, representatives from which he had previously met in the Hijaz. He also possessed good connections with the Hadhramis in Batavia. From 1893 to 1906, he lived in Gang Parapatan in Kwitang, a quarter where more and more Hadhramis settled upon being given permission to leave Pekojan, the Arab quarter, where they were obliged to settle before (Van Koningsveld 1985a, 44). Almost daily he heard and spoke the Hadhrami dialect, as he wrote time and again to his colleagues and friends Nöldeke and Goldziher (Van Koningsveld 1985b and 1985c). In his work he was assisted by Sayyid ʿUthman, a prominent local scholar, who had studied approximately twenty-three years in Mecca and Hadhramaut, and

2 In colonial times, the Hadhramis were always called Arabs. If Snouck writes about Arabs in the Indies, he also primarily refers to Hadhramis, unless explicitly stated otherwise.

many Hadhramis visited Snouck both upon his invitation or upon their own initiative to discuss his and their interests (Van Koningsveld 1985b, 61; 1985c, 144).[3]

From his arrival in the colony, he made notes about the Hadhrami minority, especially on ethnographical, historical, and linguistic topics. He questioned newly arrived immigrants concerning recent developments in the Hadhramaut as well as matters about which he could not get information from the established. Particularly during the first years of his stay in the tropics, he collected all kinds of things worth knowing about the Hadhramis. Within a year, he possessed, for example, "several hundreds of proverbs provided with comment," which he had collected at night in the old downtown Arab quarter—defying heat, fatigue and mosquitos (Van Koningsveld 1985b, 61). Later he mentioned in a letter that he gathered many folk tales, linguistic notes, "rich lexicographical material from Hadramut" and had phonographed "several Hadrami Qacides accompanied by gambus" (Van Koningsveld 1985c, 240, 243).[4] "Arabists", he wrote, are able to "revel in the world of the Hadramis" in the Indies (Van Koningsveld 1985b, 63). It is paradoxical that what at that period of time, and for a long time afterwards, was impossible to achieve in Hadhramaut, was readily realizable among the Hadhramis in the colonial capital: "es gibt deren bloss in Batavia 2000 [Araber], von denen die Hälfte frisch aus der Wüste, denn es gibt ein ewiges Hin und Her unter den Leuten" (Van Koningsveld 1985c, 164).[5]

With regard to his "pure" scientific work on the Hadhramis, we can be brief. Although Snouck repeatedly claimed to have collected much data particularly related to the language and culture, he has only incorporated a small part of that material into publications. Repeatedly he complained about lacking time to collect more and to order and interpret his data. When he returned to Leiden,

3 See on this scholar, Kaptein 1997. Pangeran Aria Achmad Djajadiningrat, a well-known Indonesian civil servant and politician, who went to primary and secondary school in Batavia, writes in his memoirs (1936, 77) that he often met the scholar Sayyid 'Uthman at the house of his supervisor and his father's friend Snouck Hurgronje. He could, however, never follow their conversation, as they always spoke in Arabic.

4 A Qacide (*qasîda*) is a poem. *Gambus* is a kind of Arabian 6-stringed lute as well as a small orchestra consisting of lutes ans drums (*gendang*).

5 Translated into English: "In Batavia alone there are already 2000 [Arabs], half of them from the desert, because they travel back and forth forever." Until the thirties of the twentieth century hardly anything was known about Hadhramaut. When Snouck left for Batavia in 1889 there was say and write one scientifically oriented travel report about this area written by Von Wrede (1870). The study of Van den Berg (1886) was, just as the writings of Snouck, completely based on data obtained from immigrants.

FIGURE 9 Christiaan Snouck Hurgronje (1902)
PHOTO COLLECTION UNIVERSITY LIBRARY LEIDEN,
PK-F-58.1439

his interest for the Hadhrami society and culture was eclipsed by other pursuits. In fact, he has only written three articles about Hadhramis: one about the poetry of the *ba-atwah*, the begging street singers in Hadhramaut, one about Hadhrami proverbs and riddles, and one on *rifgeh*, a violent seizure of possessions in Hadhramaut (Snouck Hurgronje 1891, 1905 and 1906). Despite their appeal, these works can be considered to be anecdotical rather than systematic treatises on the Hadhramaut and its inhabitants. His knowledge of the Hadhrami dialect appears in particular from his correspondence with col-

leagues. In these letters he explained all kinds of linguistic and grammatical peculiarities and fulminated against Landsberg's *Hadramatica*, that he straightforwardly described as unreliable.[6] Regularly he also gave Van den Berg what for, for example: "What van den Berg in his "Hadhramout" [...] says about linguistics and ethnography is at least for three-quarters wrong" (Van Koningsveld 1985b, 23).

As a source of study of the Hadhramis in the Dutch Indies, Snouck's advices are more important than his scientific publications. Between 1889 and 1936 he wrote more than 82 short and long recommendations related directly to the Arabs, of which the Hadhramis constituted the greater part.[7] They dealt with divergent topics, such as controversial persons, the position of the heads of the Arab quarters, the exploitation of the graves of Hadhrami saints,[8] the relation between tribes in the Hadhramaut, Hadhrami customary law, the exalted position of the *sayyid*, usury, and the collection of money for the construction of a railroad between Damascus and the Hijaz. There were, however, two themes which dominated all the others, both with regard to their importance and frequency. The first is the unequal and unjust treatment of the Hadhramis in the Indies; the second is the susceptibility of this minority for Pan-Islamism. These topics deserve individual treatment.

1 Countless Extortions and Useless Bantering

When Snouck Hurgronje arrived in the Indies at the end of the nineteenth century, the Hadhramis were, just like other so-called Foreign Orientals (*vreemde oosterlingen*), subject to all kinds of stipulations that restricted their freedom of movement. While they could enter the colony with almost no difficulty, once they were inside the country they could no longer move freely. They were obliged to settle in separate Arab quarters, and whenever they wanted to leave their place of residence, for business, to visit relatives or whatever, they needed a special travel pass. The measures were meant to protect the indigenous population against undesirable economic, political, and religious influences from outsiders.

6 In 1905 he writes, for example, in a letter to Nöldeke: "What he takes for Hadhrami, is a medley of languages of Aden, coastal places such as Mekèlle, Sjïhr and even the Hidjaz with what the Hadhramis who had settled there could remember from their native tongue" (Van Koningsveld 1985b, 106).

7 Here I limit myself to the recommendations published by Gobée and Adriaanse 1957–1965, II: 1510–1752.

8 See Kaptein 2002.

Although Snouck shared the opinion of the colonial government about the harmful influence of the Hadhramis with regard to the political-religious situation—indeed he frequently brought this possibility to the attention of the government—he was not an advocate of the existing restrictions for freedom of movement. Time and time again, he pleaded that these rules be less stringent and urged that they be abolished as soon as the time was ripe. However, until 1919, thus extending into the period that he resided again in Leiden, he thought it would be better if the admission of Hadhramis to the colony were restricted or even forbidden. The evil, so to speak, had to be stopped at the border. People who had, however, entered the country previously, could not be expected to live in isolation of the society at large.

Owing to his close relations with Hadhrami circles, Snouck had a better understanding of what took place within this community than almost anyone else. He was not only aware of how the Hadhramis lived and worked, but also of the problems with which they had to contend as well as their grievances against the government. Almost daily he heard how they were treated by local and regional officials. Regularly, he informed the Governor-General on the dissension among the Hadhramis with respect to the discriminative measures. However, it would be incorrect and unfair to paint him only as providing information. More than once he also to a certain degree, looked after the interests of the Hadhramis and pleaded for improvement of their situation. It speaks well for him that his political ideas did not refrain him from efforts to ask for a decent treatment of the Hadhramis.

Several times he speaks with disapproval about the existing practice of coercing the Hadhramis, like the other Foreign Orientals, to live in distinct quarters. Because of the pollution, unhygienic conditions, and the crowding together of a continuously swelling population due to natural growth and new immigrants, the Hadhrami quarters were the unhealthiest and most populated parts of the cities and towns. More than once, Snouck points out that this form of segregation and forced settlement cannot be perpetuated. For the well-to-do and educated members of the minority in particular it was a gross insult. For that reason, he argued in favour of a gradual relaxation of the settlement regulations which were already evaded on a large scale. Snouck's position in this is in agreement with his idea that in the long run the Hadhramis had to be integrated with the indigenous society. Only in that way could negative influences in the political and religious field be neutralized.

Snouck had even more difficulty with the pass system. His pleas for "mitigation and reduction" of the obstructions for travel are larded with examples of the obstructions experienced by the Hadhramis who wanted to move. Passes were usually issued after a long delay, which was particularly injurious to the

interests of traders who were dependent on alert reactions to developments in the market. He observed that businessmen who wanted to travel between Batavia and Buitenzorg (a distance of about sixty kilometers) often had to wait hours for the required documents. Even persons who wanted to go to nearby Meester Cornelis needed a pass. Those who stayed away longer than twenty-four hours, were obliged to obtain a stamp on their pass on the way at every stop of more than six hours and in the place of destination. As the administrative procedures could only be carried out during office hours, the traders were further hampered in the amount of time they had to conduct their business transactions.

For each trip, whether short or long, one had to ask for a separate travel pass. For a long time, travellers to the interior had to follow prescribed routes. Some regencies had stricter rules than others. Traders from Bandung, for example, were only allowed to visit district towns and could not go at all to villages. Other regions, like the Preanger, required that preceding departure, the authorities at the destination be informed. One could only depart after these authorities had informed those in the place of residence of their consent. The preparation for such a trip took several days; even longer if further inquiries were required. Both the issue and renewal of passes involved costs, not to mention bribes. Offenses were fined, and a person who had not paid his business taxes was refused a pass. Snouck wrote several letters to officials to plead the cause of persons who were refused a pass. Indeed, this often concerned prominent figures whom he knew personally and who wanted to visit relatives and acquaintances or wanted to make a holiday. His indignation, however, was not restricted to prominent individuals: he held the opinion that the regulation was unjust and dishonest.

His anger was also based on the way the Hadhramis were habitually treated. Snouck had the strong impression that the pass regulation was applied more harshly and more arbitrarily to the Hadhramis than to other minorities. The authorities were normally more indulgent to the Chinese. According to Snouck, many civil servants and policemen took pleasure in thwarting and nagging the Hadhramis. One found among both the younger and older officials many *Araber-fresser*: people who had all kinds of prejudices against the Arab population. Among the Europeans, the Hadhramis did not have a good reputation. They were known as "exacting" and "impudent," because they "pleaded their interests strongly and stubbornly." Snouck tried in his advice to refute the existing prejudices related to issues such as usury, fraud and immorality by pointing out that these affairs did not happen more often among Hadhramis than among other Asian foreigners or Europeans. Repeatedly, he criticized the arrogance, tactlessness and roughness, in brief the lack of manners, of the lower officials

in particular who were in charge of issuing and controlling passes. Almost every member of the Hadhrami minority was a periodical victim of humiliation and coarse treatment:

> every respectable Arab with whom one speaks about it, will confirm this, and add to it, that nowhere else in the world [...], such stipulations of total restriction of movement are applied to them.
>
> GOBÉE and ADRIAANSE 1957–1965, II: 1566

Even the heads of the Arab communities apparently had to submit to such treatment: "*All* former or present-day Arab heads who I know have informed me on this grievance more than once" (Gobée and Adriaanse 1957–1965, II: 1559). Snouck regretted this highly, because this contempt had made it almost impossible to find decent and reliable persons for formal leadership positions in the Arab communities. If neccessary, he did not recoil from criticizing public authorities. In 1902 Snouck, in a letter to the Governor-General accused the Controleur Van Raadshoven that he had treated Shaykh Oemar Mangoes, at that time *kapten Arab* in Batavia, in a rude manner and that the demand of the civil servant as to how Mangoes should show respect was inappropriate. The same year, the Resident of Batavia was also the subject of Snouck's criticism, after he called the *kapten* who had not followed the prescribed procedure for handling a request *kurang ajar* (bad-mannered; "an in indigenous ears very rude term of abuse"). Snouck at the same time blamed the bad habit of this high official to address prominent locals or foreign Asians who were educated in an European way in "volapük-Malay" (Gobée and Adriaanse 1957–1965, II: 1563). In addition to criticizing the manners of civil servants, Snouck took offence at the tone that was used in official reports when referring to the Hadhramis. In his opinion, the Arabs were the victim of "countless extortions and useless bantering" (Gobée and Adriaanse 1957–1965, II: 1566).

2 The Danger of Pan-Islamism

Besides the pass system, Snouck also devoted his recommendations to the issue of Pan-Islamism. For him Pan-Islamism was:

> the feeling of belonging together which to a greater or lesser extent is active or easy to evoke from its latent situation among all adherents of Islam; the awareness of belonging to a powerful unity, which plead or ought to

> plead the cause of each of her parts when their threatened political, social or economic interests had to be defended.
>
> GOBÉE and ADRIAANSE 1957–1965, II: 1709

In the second part of the nineteenth century, it was the Turkish empire which stirred up and exploited this feeling of *communitas*. It increasingly assumed the role of defender of the interests of all Muslims in the world, and Sultan 'Abdul Hamid (1876–1909) presented himself habitually as the successor of the caliphs. This concern with Islamic matters was far from unselfish. The once extensive empire had shrunk due to internal tensions and western intrigues. As the worldly power of the Turkish empire crumbled, the aspirations in the religious field increased strongly. By exploiting Islam as a source of power, the sultan hoped to counteract the falling apart of his realm and the hollowing out of his position.

The Hadhramis in the Dutch Indies were among the many Muslim populations which turned to the Turkish governement to look after their interests. They sought support in their struggle against the oppressive treatment which they experienced under Dutch colonial rule. They appealed to the sultan not only as Muslims but also as Turkish subjects as the Hadhramaut was, at least nominally, considered to be part of the Turkish empire. Based on this latter assumption, they thought themselves to be entitled to the same legal status as Europeans.

Although the leaders of the Hadhrami community had addressed the Turkish government several times by presenting petitions, it was the Turkish consuls in Batavia who listened to their complaints. The consuls, in their turn, were only too ready to stir up the feelings of discontent. Furthermore, in many Turkish and Arab papers and periodicals negative articles were published about the unequal treatment to which not only the indigenous Muslims, but in particular the foreign Muslims in the Dutch Indies had to submit. Although most articles appeared under pseudonym, they were obviously written by Hadhramis from Batavia or the Strait Settlements. The writers were well acquainted with the quarter and pass system. Unfortunately, according to Snouck, they did not restrict themselves to relating the mere facts. Anything that could be used to portray the situation in a bad light was used. Regularly one could, for example, read that the reading of the Qur'an, religious services, and religious education was obstructed or forbidden. The articles not only dealt with the discrimination of Hadhramis, but also with that of the millions of indigenous Muslims in the colony who were purposefully denied information about the developments in the Middle East.

Although, properly speaking, Snouck agreed with the criticism of the measures concerning restrictions in the freedom of movement, he was alarmed by

the consequences of the contacts that the Hadhramis had with representatives of the Turkish empire and by the inflammatory articles in the international Islamic press. He feared that with support of the Islamic world the Hadhramis would increasingly turn against Dutch colonial rule under the Islamic flag, and that they in the long run would be joined by the indigenous population, which held their Arab compatriots, particularly the *sayyid*, who claim to be descendants of the Prophet, in high esteem. It would not be a movement for equality but rather one endorsing political-religious aspirations. This anxiety was reiterated in almost each advice that Snouck gave. In 1899 he wrote that whereas in the recent past only a few Arabs contemplated the use of an improved relationship with Constantinople:

> nowadays the greater part of them is convinced that the rescue for the Arab nation in the Dutch lndies must come from Turkey and that strong and continuous agitation forms the expedient to speed up the result.
>
> GOBÉE and ADRIAANSE 1957–1965, II: 1543

A few years later, he warned that the ultimate goal of the Hadhramis was to spread Islam and to show the indigenous population that the tyrannical and heathen colonial administration merciless exploited her:

> that movement [Pan-Islamism] ever increases, exercises in Arab circles here an increasingly injurious influence, and now and then prepares to turn to the native public by using local languages for its essays and pamphlets.
>
> GOBÉE and ADRIAANSE 1957–1965, II: 1637

According to Snouck there were three ways to keep Pan-Islamism at bay. Firstly, to insist upon rectification of incorrect information and by contradicting wrongly created expectations which appeared in papers and journals. As all publications in the Turkish empire were subject to censorship and the government was responsible for the tenor of reporting, this could best be done through the existing diplomatic channels. Secondly, after each pronouncement by the Turkish government which could be seen as meddling in Dutch internal affairs, one should immediately make clear that they had no say at all in affairs which concerned the Hadhramis and local inhabitants of the colony. In his letters to the Governor-General and the Secretary of the Colonies, Snouck repeatedly blamed the Dutch legation in Constantinople of being in arrears of the facts, because of which it was always too late in repairing the damage caused. He asserted that despite his own chronic lack of time, wether in the

Indies or Holland, he was better and earlier informed about the content of publications in the Middle East than Dutch diplomats stationed in the area itself. He also fulminated against the successive Turkish consuls in Batavia, who had lost their sense for proportion and for too long could go their own way without contradiction by the local authorities. Because it could not realistically be expected that the distribution of Arab newspapers in the Indies could be controlled, Snouck did not expect much of a ban on their publication.

The most effective solution, according to Snouck, would be to refuse Hadhramis admission to the colony. This, more than anything else, would make it possible to check the Pan-Islamic danger, as each new immigrant poured oil on the flames. To counter Turkish complaints, the government could refer to the fact that strictly speaking the Hadhramaut formed no part of the Turkish empire, and that no Ottoman official had ever penetrated this remoted and isolated region. The Turkish claim to this area existed in name only. Furthermore, admitting Hadhramis to the Dutch Indies should be reciprocated by allowing Europeans to enter the Hadhramaut. As long as this region, which was continually plagued by tribal wars, was not accessible for Europeans, the Netherlands was entitled to exclude Hadhramis from its territory. Finally, he pointed out that countries such as Australia and South Africa had also closed their borders for certain population groups, and that the international community, the Islamic countries included, had eventually tolerated this.

Even after the revolution in Turkey in 1908, Snouck maintained this view. He was not assured that the new men in power, who were in favour of a smaller but real Turkish nation, would not be expelled by their adversaries. Moreover, new powers were eager to assume the role of Turkey as leader of the Muslim world. Repeatedly, he emphasized, that if these dire predictions did not take place, the government should not be so short-sighted as to think that Pan-Islamism has disappeared. Not only sovereigns and nations could propagate the Islamic ideals, but also "local organizations and international congresses, which may eventually lead to the foundation of a permanent international counsel, a Muslim League of Nations opposite to the European one" (Gobée and Adriaanse 1957–1965, II: 1715). One should be aware that periods of passivity and activity succeed each other: "in countries like the Indies Pan-Islamism is a constant source of disorder, an enemy of authority which every now and then outmanoeuvres the officials" (Gobée and Adriaanse 1957–1965, II: 1683).

Although within the colony there was a lot of opposition to Snouck's idea of prohibiting the immigration of Hadhramis, in particular because of the international repercussions, in 1912 a start was made with excluding the Hadhramis as much as possible. Starting in 1918, only those who had relatives up to the third degree residing in the Indies were allowed to enter. A year later, however, the

borders were opened again as the government feared a conflict with Great Britain which had in the meantime taken over the dominion of the Hadhramaut and which did not accept that these "subjects" were being treated differently from other British subjects from the East. At that time, Snouck renounced all responsibility for further repercussions. In his opinion, the government had lingered too long in introducing the prohibition of admittance:

> In the ten years which passed since the last discussion of this topic [...] the evolution of the society in the Indies has made huge strides, especially with regard to the natives and Foreign Orientals, that problems, for the solution for which favourable time has been passed by unused, at present display an entirely different aspect.
>
> GOBÉE and ADRIAANSE 1957–1965, II: 1699

Despite this change in tactics, he stubbornly clung to his opinion on the Pan-Islamic peril.

3 Incompatible Ends

Although Snouck's recommendations pertaining to the freedom of movement of the Hadhramis and the importance of Pan-Islamism in these circles were written in the same period, they exhibit striking differences with regard to factual evidence, style, composition, and involvement. In his advice on the segregation policy, we hear a different Snouck Hurgronje than in his opinions on the striving for more unity and cooperation among Muslims all over the world. It often seems as if he speaks about two different groups instead of one and the same.

With relation to the quarter and pass system and concomitant practices, Snouck placed himself emphatically on the side of the Hadhramis. Based on political as well as humanitarian considerations, he protested against the discriminatory regulations and defended to the best of his ability the interests of the minority in this respect at the highest administrative level. In his advice Snouck demonstrated to be well informed on the injustices and malices with which the Hadhramis had to put up. In each letter he gave examples and details of the, in his opinion, shocking and humiliating nature and consequences of the policy being pursued. Some recommendations were even completely devoted to the condescending treatment members of the Hadhrami minority had experienced during their travels through the archipelago. Snouck also set forth the opinion of the people involved, be it in his own words. He constantly

referred to what he saw and heard everyday, to the close contacts he maintained with Hadhramis in the capital, and to the information he got from formal and informal leaders within the community. In his opinion, he was much nearer to this group than other government officials and, consequently, felt himself better informed of internal developments going on. In a letter to the Governor-General about the pass system in 1902, he wrote, for example:

> It is of course self-evident that many Arabs are more on terms of familiarity with me than with the Resident and that they raise their personal grievances to me long before they consider to lodge official complaints.
>
> GOBÉE and ADRIAANSE 1957–1965, II: 1559

Snouck based his recommendations on empirical knowledge he had acquired first hand in the migrant community. As a result, he could be very matter-of-fact about the topic. The tone in his letters was invariably objective, well-weighed and aloof. He did not lose his temper, although he continuously showed his indignation. Snouck established facts and represented feelings.

In his advice he turned against an unwise policy and against short-sighted civil servants. The Hadhramis themselves were not reproached. To the contrary, the negative economic, political, and religious influences usually attributed to them were played down or reduced to right proportions. From an economic point of view, their actions, according to him, hardly differed from those of the Chinese and Europeans. Politically and religiously they only were a risk as long as they were isolated from the society at large. Almost no improper word about the Hadhrami was uttered.

This was quite different when he wrote about Pan-Islamism. Here Snouck did not present himself as a friend, but as an adversary of the Hadhramis. He no longer stood up for them, but attacked them. He even stirred up the existent anti-Arab feelings in government circles. There is no question of objectivity anymore and in his letters the Hadhramis are repeatedly described with offensive and condescending expressions and adjectives such as "scum" and "narrow-minded." In 1898, for example, he wrote to the Governor-General:

> the greater part of the people [...] traveling this way consists of poor Hadhramis who grew up in an environment in which misery and ignorance as well as delusion and fanaticism rule. They contribute little or nothing to the flourishing of trade and industry, and their moral influence on the indigenous population is mostly harmful, although favourable exceptions can be noted.
>
> GOBÉE and ADRIAANSE 1957–1965, II: 1533

With regard to the danger of Pan-Islamism, Snouck appealed mainly to what was published about the discrimination of Arabs in the Dutch East Indies in pamphlets and Islamic periodicals from Turkey, Egypt, and Singapore, such as *al-Maʿlûmât, al-Muʾayyad* and *Thamarât al-funûn*. He turned out to be oversensitive to criticism levelled against the colonial policy in the international press. Time and time again he fulminated against Dutch envoys in those countries who forgot to prevent or correct these reports.

In contrast to the other topics he dealt with, however, he hardly put forward local data that substantiated his assertion that the combination of Pan-Islamism and Hadhramis brought the survival of the colonial state in jeopardy. From what he said, it appeared that Hadhramis only flirted with Pan-Islamism to extort a position equal to that of the Europeans (Van Dijk 2002).

Examples which explain that the greater part of this Islamic minority really adhered to the Pan-Islamic ideals and advocated zealously for their propagation among the indigenous population were entirely absent. In a span of more than thirty years, Snouck did not give one single piece of evidence to support his fear. His anxiety about the negative consequences of the departure of a handful young Hadhramis to Constantinople to continue their studies there, can hardly be taken serious. Whereas with regard to other questions he regularly referred to his intimate relationship with many Hadhramis, in this instance he preferred to be silent on what the man in the street thought and what he heard from friends and acquaintances. It obviously did not suit his purpose.

Of course there were Hadhramis who were drawn towards the Pan-Islamic ideas, but they constituted a minority. Snouck saw the statements and actions of a small number of Hadhramis as representative for the whole group. As far as Pan-Islamism is concerned, he always spoke about the Hadhramis in general. The accuracy and the details which characterize his letters on other subjects is missing here. In his opinion of Pan-Islamism, Snouck was guided by prejudices and not by what he saw and heard.

The style he used in the dealing with this question differs thoroughly from that used for other matters. He got excited, fulminated, was unreasonable, presumptuous and offensive towards all parties involved: the Turkish government, the Middle East press, Dutch authorities and diplomats as well as Hadhramis. While he succeeded in his advice on the freedom of movement of the Hadhrami minority to find a balance between distance and involvement as well as between objectivity and subjectivity, with regard to Pan-Islamism he had the greatest difficulty to draw these lines.

There are also resemblances in the recommendations on both questions. Snouck continuously exerted his personal authority (Kommers 1996, 90–91).

He presented himself as the pre-eminently authority in the field of Islamic affairs and spoke in a peremptory tone. If he could not ground his argument on the results of research among the Hadhramis, as in the case of Pan-Islamism, he relied on his reputation as an Arabist. During his term of office as adviser he inexorably stuck to his opinions. Snouck was never in doubt; in his letters he represented, in his opinion, the real situation.

Despite the prestige Snouck possessed in higher government circles, his recommendations were not always followed or decisive. The abolition of the detested pass system and quarter system in successively 1914 and 1919 had without doubt also taken place without his mediation. His fear for the consequences of the Pan-Islamic movement was in the end taken less serious, although one of the Governor-Generals he served, closed the borders for Hadhrami immigrants during a certain period of time.

CHAPTER 8

Post-War Remittances from the Netherlands East Indies to Hadhramaut

Before World War II, a flourishing passenger, commercial and money trade existed between the Netherlands East Indies and Hadhramaut.* The Dutch colony accommodated the largest Hadhrami community in Southeast Asia. At the end of the 1930s, it consisted of almost 80,000 members, a substantial number of whom were born in Hadhramaut. Each year, hundreds went back to their land of origin for a period of time. Men—migration was an exclusively male affair—visited their relatives, in the meantime selling goods from across the ocean and buying goods to export. Sons left for the homeland of their fathers to follow religiously oriented schools and to internalize Arab values and norms. Wealthy families often owned a second house in Hadhramaut and quite a number of successful migrants returned to end their days in their place of birth. Large sums of money were also sent annually from the Indies to needy relatives in Hadhramaut. Initially, the money was handed over by a family member, a friend or an acquaintance, but it later became customary to remit funds via bank transfer. At the end of the 1930s and the beginning of the 1940s, almost 7 million guilders were remitted yearly through the Nederlandsche Handelsmaatschappij (NHM) and British banks (Lekon 1997, 265).[1] The bank transactions, however, never completely supplanted the habit of bringing money in person to relatives. The remittances were the most important means of support for the population of Hadhramaut. It kept the regional economy going in an area that was dry, poor and overpopulated. The proceeds of traditional sources of livelihood such as agriculture, keeping herds of sheep and camels, and local trade were too low to feed the 200,000 to 300,000 inhabitants (exact figures are lacking).[2] Remittances were used to buy food and other products.

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1 See also Dingemans H.H., "Kort verslag dienstreis Hadramaut en besprekingen Kamaraan", 18 April 1947.

2 Brief van Britse consul Batavia aan gouverneur-generaal Nederlands-Indië, 15 March 1948.

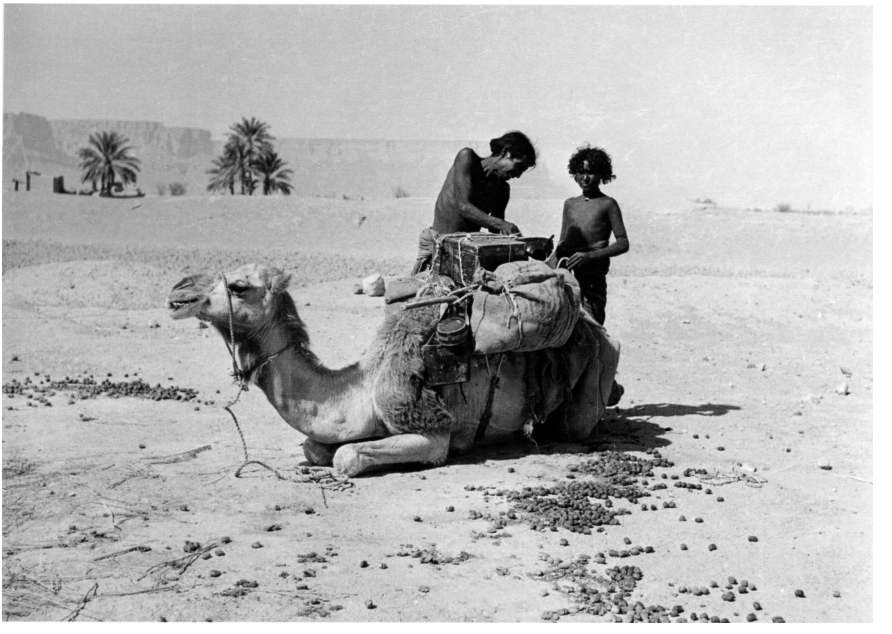

FIGURE 10 Two young men on their way to Huraydha
PHOTO D. VAN DER MEULEN, 1944. COLLECTIE STICHTING NATIONAAL MUSEUM WERELDCULTUREN, TM-10023129

The Japanese occupation of the Netherlands Indies in March 1942 put an abrupt end to the personal contacts and remittances. From one day to the next, the inhabitants of Hadhramaut had to live without financial support from their relatives in the Indies as well as the returns of their possessions in that country. This produced hardship for a considerable proportion of the population. The situation deteriorated even further as rain was scarce over three successive years, making the cultivation of crops in the wadis almost impossible. In 1943, a two-year famine started that claimed many lives, particularly at the end of 1944. Hundreds, perhaps thousands, died during this period.

The Dutch envoy in Jeddah, Van der Meulen, who made a journey through Hadhramaut at the beginning of 1944, found that British aid for the suffering population left much to be desired. He pressed the British governor of Aden, who had asked explicitly for his opinion in this matter, to carry larger quantities of food to the stricken area. As soon as they could, the British opened an airlift from Aden to Hadhramaut. RAF planes transported emergency rations to the starvation area. In the worst-hit places, soup kitchens were erected. Later on, water pumps were installed, while agricultural loans were

provided on favourable conditions. Through these and other relief measures that went on until 1947, the British authorities were able to alleviate the worst misery.[3]

Van der Meulen, who had travelled through Hadhramaut for the first time in 1931, visited the area not with the intention of becoming involved with the relief but to make clear to the Hadhramis, who were cut off from their family and properties in the Indies, that the colonial government-in-exile in Australia had not forgotten them. Wherever he met Hadhramis, he assured them that Dutch rule of the Indies would be recovered and that those who were Dutch subjects, presumably numbering in the thousands, would be allowed to return to the colony. The colonial government also intended to allow the resumption of remittances after the defeat of the Japanese. The head of the Dutch legation in the Hijaz apparently expected a favourable outcome of the war for the Netherlands. Because of the great economic interests of Hadhramis in the Dutch East Indies, Van der Meulen pleaded after his journey with the banished Dutch authorities abroad and the British representatives on site for the opening of a Dutch consulate in Al Mukalla that should report to the legation in Jeddah. In contrast to civil servants who, in the past, had often written in less flattering terms about Hadhramis, Van der Meulen wrote in his report:

> How more and how better organized the contact with this country [the Indies] is, how safer the material well-being of Hadhramaut will be. Remittances need to be facilitated, the emigration of the surplus of the population that cannot find an existence in this desert region should be encouraged [...]. The Netherlands Indies is large, was always sympathetic towards the Hadhramis, and gave them a fair chance in trade, cultures, and young industry. The Dutch authority has in him a loyal subject.[4]

The involvement eased the mind of the Hadhramis, who were completely cut off from information on the developments in the Indies and who looked forward to the moment when the pre-war relationships could be restored. Great was their disappointment, therefore, when after the war, the returning colonial government, which had lost part of its former territory to the newly proclaimed Indonesian republic, did not live up to its promises. To rebuild the colonial economy, immigration had to be restricted and as little money as possible permitted to leave the country. Only Hadhramis who were Dutch subjects and

3 Van der Meulen, D., "Beschouwingen omtrent de toekomstige organisatie onzer vertegenwoordiging in de Arabische Near East landen", 14 May 1945.

4 Ibid.

were indispensable for the economic recovery of the Indies were allowed to come back, but money transfers from the colony to Hadhramaut were not yet permitted.[5] Without money from outside, however, return to the Indies was impossible. Without the remittances, the circumstances of life in Hadhramaut also did not change. For that reason, Hadhramis on both sides of the Indian Ocean urged the colonial administration to resume the pre-war regulation.

The authorities, however, were not very obliging. Only in January 1947, almost one-and-a-half years after the Japanese capitulation, did the colonial administration open the door for a resumption of remittances on a modest scale. It introduced the so-called valuta pass scheme, which permitted the Hadhramis and other Foreign Orientals such as Indians and Chinese to transfer 36 guilders every three months to relatives in their country of origin.[6] For the majority of recipients, this amount was a mere pittance, only a fraction of the sums received before the war. This system further increased the unrest among the already sorely tried population of Hadhramaut.

To calm public sentiment and review the existing situation, the new Dutch envoy in Jeddah, Dingemans, made an inspection tour in Hadhramaut from 28 March to 3 April 1947 (Dingemans 1973, 184–203).[7] Along the way, he saw for himself that the economic situation of the people was far from satisfactory. In some places, the influence of remittances from Singapore, which had resumed in the previous six months, had started to take effect. However, it was mainly the relatives of wealthy families who had profited and they seldom invested in productive sectors of the economy. The money received was used to rebuild their houses or to buy cars and other luxury goods instead of being allocated to educational or agricultural purposes. The majority of the population still lived in sheer poverty and many of them had sold their belongings in the Indies partly or entirely to money-lenders in order to cope during the crisis. Others apparently were anxious to leave Hadhramaut to sell their real estate in the colony.

During his tour, Dingemans visited the towns of Huraydha, Shibam, Seiyun and Tarim. In each place, he met with representatives of Indo-Hadhramis who all voiced their concern about the refusal of the colonial administration to restore the export of money to Hadhramaut. In Al Mukalla, Alawi bin Abubakar Alatas, the founder and president of the Indonesian Arab Society, gave him a written statement that called attention to the suffering the Indo-Hadhramis had experienced since 1942:

5 "Kort verslag dienstreis", 18 April 1947.

6 "Brief Britse consul Batavia", 15 March 1948.

7 See also "Kortverslag dienstreis", 18 April 1947.

FIGURE 11 A view of Shibam
PHOTO D. VAN DER MEULEN, 1944. COLLECTIE STICHTING NATIONAAL MUSEUM WERELDCULTUREN, TM-60012776

> The worldwide havoc brought by the aggression of the late Axis Powers made us homeless and deprived us of the comforts of life. Now we are still passing our days with great difficulties, as we have no means for living, and now we feel eager to return to our dear homes in the Netherlands East Indies as soon as is possible for us to re-contact our family fortunes in the Far East.[8]

On behalf of his fellow-sufferers, he asked the envoy "to make every facility to rescue us from the nails of death" and "to facilitate forthwith the flow of means of living."[9] A petition handed over in Seiyun noted:

> All that was saved and kept in reserve here had been spent during the last five years; [...] they needed more than ever the financial assistance which formerly came from their East Indies properties, for their own needs and to save their country from ruin.[10]

8 Statement by Alawi Alatas, 29 March 1947.
9 Ibid.
10 Petition Seiyun, 31 March 1947.

It struck Dingemans that the people with whom he spoke were, to a large extent, unaware of the altered circumstances in the colony. Time and again he had to explain the impact of the war in the Pacific, that there was a huge difference "between the Netherlands Indies before the war and Indonesia after the war," that the economic situation had changed radically, and that the country had gone through a phase of recovery in which strict currency laws were indispensable.[11] For that reason, it would take some time before remittances could be resumed and migration to Indonesia on a large scale would again be allowed. What he deliberately neglected to mention was that it was possible the Netherlands might be forced to transfer its power to an independent Indonesia as a result of the ongoing independence struggle and pressure from outside. Sidestepping this topic, he advised those with whom he spoke to follow a new avenue in Hadhramaut and to make it independent of remittances by involving the younger generations. To realise this, according to him, the country needed a change in mentality. Instead of a passive society, a "country of sleep and death," Hadhramaut had to become an active one, a "country of labour or death."[12] Despite these comments, at each meeting the envoy promised to convey to his government the anxiety caused by the embargo on monetary transactions. After his return to Jeddah, he wrote to the colonial authorities urging them not to wait too long to resume the remittances as this would enlarge the still existing goodwill towards the colonial regime. He also advised the authorities, in particular, to think of the interests of the common people. The transfer of small amounts to many persons would be of more help then giving preferential treatment to some men of substance. The government of the Indies, however, had other priorities and let things drift.

In March 1948, the British Consul-General in Batavia, Sir Francis Shepherd, made a stand for the impoverished population of Hadhramaut. He reminded Governor-General Van Mook of the continuous emergency in the area and the inadequacy of the transfers permitted under the valuta pass scheme. At the same time, he put forward three arguments to allow the more extensive transport of capital:

> [F]irst, the substantial improvement which has occurred in the economic condition of the Netherlands Indies during recent months; secondly, the unique nature of the dependence of the Hadhramaut upon remittances

11 "Kort verslag dienstreis", 18 April 1947.
12 Ibid.

FIGURE 12 A group of women and children in Shibam
PHOTO D. VAN DER MEULEN, 1944. COLLECTIE STICHTING NATIONAAL MUSEUM WERELDCULTUREN, TM-10030122

> from its migrants abroad; and thirdly, the important role which Hadhramis have so long played in the economic, social and religious development of the Netherlands Indies.[13]

In the meantime, the situation in Hadhramaut had worsened. In Al Mukalla and Aden, hundreds of repatriates arrived regularly in ships from the Indies. Most of them only had enough cash to manage for a few months, after which they also became dependent upon financial support from abroad. The list of people in need with relatives and properties in the Indies became longer and longer, while a new famine was imminent.[14] The president of the Indonesian Arab Society in Al Mukalla announced that Hadhramaut could no longer admit repatriates without remittances. Dingemans was surprised that in 1948, Batavia had put aside 1,5 million pounds sterling for pilgrims to Mecca, but hardly anything for their indigent fellow countrymen in Hadhramaut.[15]

In reaction to the appeal of the British Consul-General—which apparently made more of an impression than the cries of despair of Indo-Hadhramis

13 "Brief Britse consul Batavia", 15 March 1948.
14 Brief gezant Jeddah aan luitenant gouverneur-generaal, 7 September 1948.
15 Brief gezant Jeddah aan gouverneur-generaal, 5 May 1948.

within and outside the country—the government decided to allow extra financial assistance in special cases of hardship to relatives in the first degree, although it was not prepared to put aside more than 3 million guilders a year.[16] By then it had already reached the conclusion that the pass scheme did not work properly. Due to a lack of control on the issue of and trade in passes, the system was undermined systematically and large sums of money were smuggled out of the colony, with a considerable portion of the remittances not reaching the people for whom they were intended. Moreover, Hadhramis who returned to their homeland often took more money with them than had been agreed upon. As a watertight regulation required the cooperation of the foreign authorities involved, the government invited the consul to present a proposal for improved control that would be given favourable consideration. Quite appropriately, the consul answered that the formulation of such a plan was a Dutch affair. He offered, however, the full assistance of his office in implementing a new regulation that would alleviate the dreadful situation in Hadhramaut and was also prepared to ask the British authorities in the East Aden Protectorate for assistance. To meet the government's wish to some extent, he suggested giving those who had already received money in 1941 a certain percentage of this former amount, while new requests should be judged on their urgency. The Foreign Exchange Control could send each sum directly to the recipients or indirectly, as a block remittance, to a reliable organization in Hadhramaut that could take care of the distribution. In the latter case, it would be easier to control the total amount of remittances.[17]

The authorities, however, had nothing to fall back upon, as the archive of remittances had been lost during the war. It could approve transfers of money on the basis of pre-war receipts and bank declarations, but that would be very complicated and time-consuming. The same applied in fact for post-war requests; civil servants could not take a decision without pieces of evidence. For reasons of efficiency, the administration preferred, therefore, to delegate these activities to trustworthy and expert representatives of the Hadhrami community in the colony.[18]

In September 1948, in close cooperation with the Office for Islamic Affairs, a commission of three prominent Hadhramis was formed to advise the For-

16 Advies Secretaris van Staat van Binnenlandse Zaken, 19 May 1948; Antwoord Directie Verre Oosten (DIRVO) aan Britse consul Batavia, 10 June 1948.

17 Advies Nederlandsch-Indisch Deviezen Instituut (NIDI) aan gouverneur-generaal, 1 April 1949; Antwoord DIRVO aan Britse consul Batavia, 10 June 1948.

18 Advies NIDI aan gouverneur-generaal, 12 July 1948; Memorandum Van Nieuwenhuijze aan DIRVO, 14 December 1948.

eign Exchange Control on each request for repatriation and remittance. It had a nearly impossible task, as it was difficult to collect all the personal information required. In addition, the connections between Hadhramaut and the Indies left much to be desired. Both the diplomatic mission in Jeddah and the Office for Islamic Affairs in Batavia agreed with Van der Meulen that for a smooth operation, the opening of a consulate in Al Mukalla could no longer be postponed. Only then would it be possible to expect sound data and control the distribution and effects of the remittances. A consulate would not only prove its importance in the ongoing crisis, but would also be of great value in the near future. The expectation was, after all, that in the years to come, capital, interest on possessions, inheritances, rent, grants, allowances and gifts would continuously be transferred to Hadhramaut.[19]

At the beginning of 1949, the Office for Islamic Affairs, which of all governmental bodies was best informed on what went on in the Hadhrami community, asked Dingemans once again to visit Hadhramaut to check if the remittances arrived at the right place and contributed to the improvement of the situation; as well as to make preparations for the opening of a Dutch consulate. It soon became apparent that as far as the remittances were concerned, the proposed visit would not contribute much as tangible effects were not expected to take place before April or May that year. The advisory committee, which exercised its task meticulously, was behind schedule and had only just finished the procedural preparations. Therefore, several government bodies proposed the postponement of the journey until the end of the year. In that period, however, the Dutch envoy could not leave Jeddah because of the hajj season. Eventually, the top of the colonial bureaucracy declared itself against the delay. It wanted to open the consulate as soon as possible. The consul-to-be was in a better position than anyone else to become acquainted with the necessity and the results of the remittances.[20]

Because of increasing tensions between the Indonesian Republic and the Netherlands, which had become more and more isolated internationally, the trip to Hadhramaut was ultimately cancelled. Although in April the Dutch

19 Aantekening voor DIRVO, 5 October 1948; Memorandum Van Nieuwenhuijze aan DIRVO, 14 December 1948. See also Memorandum Van Nieuwenhuijze aan De Villeneuve, 26 May 1948.

20 Memorandum Van Nieuwenhuijze aan Directeur Kabinet, 4 January 1949; Kabinet van de Hoge Vertegenwoordiging van de Kroon aan DIRVO, 11 February 1949; Wnd. Directeur NIDI aan Kabinet van de Hoge Vertegenwoordiging van de Kroon, 14 February 1949; Memorandum van Kabinet van de Hoge Vertegenwoordiging van de Kroon aan Jhr. Baud, 24 February 1949; DIRVO aan gezant Jeddah, 2 March 1949; Kabinet van de Hoge Vertegenwoordiging aan DIRVO, 5 March 1949.

envoy again had a meeting with the British governor in Aden, The Hague forbade him to go to Hadhramaut. In his hotel, he avoided a delegation of Hadhramis of Batavia who now, on their own authority and without the knowledge of the Dutch, conferred with the British about the resumption of the remittances (Dingemans 1973, 253). They obviously had written off Dutch colonial rule. The implementation of the new regulation introduced by the Foreign Exchange Office in cooperation with the Hadhrami advisory committee did not get off the ground that year. In December 1949, the Netherlands recognised the Republic of the United States of Indonesia. The relationship with Hadhramaut, remittances included, was from then on a matter for the Indonesian government to resolve.

Looking back, it is justifiable to conclude that the government of the Netherlands East Indies did not give the attention to the repeated requests for remittances that they deserved. The rebuilding of the colonial economy received priority over the flight of capital and it obstructed as much as possible the consumptive transfers of money by Foreign Orientals to their country of origin, China, India and Hadhramaut. It was unaware of the destitute situation in the south of the Arabian peninsula, where the population, in contrast to China and India, did not have sufficient sources of income. For ages, Hadhramaut had been highly dependent on earnings and incomes from capital abroad. The severing of these ties was more than a drain; it brought the region to the brink of ruin. Up until early 1948, the authorities in Batavia kept the Hadhramis, who were begging for help, dangling. Only after pressure from British quarters did the Batavian authorities become active; even then, the wheels of the colonial government turned slowly. At the beginning of 1949, almost four years after the war and nearly seven years after the transfers of money were suspended—with the exception of the small amounts allowed since the introduction of the valuta pass scheme—no notable progress had been made. Both the founding of an advisory committee and the preparations for the establishment of a Dutch consulate in Al Mukalla were started much too late. Of course, the problems on Java and the so-called Outer Islands were serious, but that should not have been a reason for the colonial government to let down a population group to which it had moral obligations on historical grounds. A tragic aspect of the whole affair was that the Hadhramis did not ask for government funds, but for the transfer of revenues from or sale of their own possessions. The Dutch colonial government had made, at least in this case, short-term humanitarian considerations subordinate to long-term economic interests.

Selected Glossary

In the Indonesian language there is no difference between the singular and plural form of a word. This applies also to long established loan words of Arab origin, who are often spelled and written differently too. Although the last decades in Islamic circles the official Arab pronounciation and spelling has gathered strength, I give preference to the widespread Arabic-Indonesian spelling.

Alawi (Ar. Ind.) Descendants of the Prophet (See Ba-'Alawi)

Al-Djamijah Al-Arabijah Al-Chairijah (Ar. Ind.) Arabic Charitable Committee

Al-Irsyad (Ar. Ind.) See Jamiyah al-Islah-wal Irsyad

Al-Tahdhibiyyah (Ar. Ind.) Educational organization

Irsyadi (Ar. Ind.) Supporter Al-Irsyad

***Al-wathon Al-millie* (Ar. Ind.)** Homeland of Islam (See *tanah air keagamaan*)

***Al-wathon Asj-sjachshi* (Ar. Ind.)** Country of birth (See *tanah air kelahiran*)

***Asabiyya* (Ar.)** Group solidarity

Ba-'Alawi (Ar.) See Alawi

***Bangsa* (Ind.)** Nation, people, race

***Bukan asli* (Ind.)** Not indigenous

***Burguk* (Ar. Ind.)** Burka

***Daif* (Ar. Ind.)** Weak or powerless person, member of lowest social class in Hadhramaut (See *masakin*)

***Fiqh* (Ar.)** Islamic jurisprudence

***Golongan* (Ind.)** Group, class

***Golongan kecil* (Ind.)** Small group, minority

***Habib* (Ar. Ind.)** Term of adress for *sayyid*

***Heiho* (Jap.)** Auxiliary soldiers

***Hijab* (Ar. Ind.)** Veil, curtain

***Ibadat* (Ar. Ind)** Religious observances

***Idul Fitri* (Ar. Ind.)** Feast of breaking the fasting period

***Inlander* (D.)** Native

Jamiat Kheir (Ar. Ind) The Benevolent Association

Jamiyah al-Islah-wal Irsyad (Ar. Ind.) The Association for Reform and Guidance (See Al-Irsyad)

***Jubah* (Ar. Ind.)** Long flowing robe

***Kafaah* (Ar. Ind.)** Equality of rank

***Kampung* (Ind.)** Quarter

***Kapten Arab* (Ind.)** Head of local Arab community in colonial times

***Kebangsaan* (Ind.)** Nationality, nationalism

***Kiayi* (Ind.)** Religious leader

***Kias* (Ar. Ind.)** Analogical reasoning

***Kongsi* (Ch. In.)** Group, association

***Lintah darat* (Ind.)** Usurer

Madjelis Sjuro Muslimin Indonesia (Masjumi) (Ind.) Consultative Council of Indonesian Muslims

Majelis Islam A'la Indonesia (MIAI) (Ind.) The Indonesian High Islamic Council

***Madrasah* (Ar. Ind.)** School; in Indonesia always an Islamic school

***Masakin* (Ar. Ind.)** The poor, member of lowest social class in Hadhramaut

***Mazhab* (Ar. Ind.)** School of Islamic law

***Minoritas* (Ind.)** Minority

Muhammadiyah (Ind.) Reformist Muslim Movement

***Muwallad* (Ar. Ind.)** Peranakan Arab, Arab of mixed parentage

Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) (Ind.) Renaissance of Muslim Scholars Islamic Association

***Nahwu* (Ar.)** Grammar; *ilmu nahwu*, science of Arab grammar

***Orang asli* (Ind.)** Original Indonesian person (See *pribumi*)

***Passenstelsel* (D.)** Pass system

***Pemuda* (Ind.)** Youth, young fighter for independence

***Peranakan* (Ind.)** Descendants of mixed marriages born in the Indies (See *muwallad*)

***Perang suci* (Ind.)** Holy war, jihad

***Perempuan* (Ind.)** Woman

***Pribumi* (Ind.)** Indigenous Indonesian

***Qabili* (Ar. Ind.)** Tribesmen, social class in Hadhramaut

Rabithah Alawiyah (Ind.) The Alawite League

***Rubah* (Ar. Ind.)** Islamic boarding school in Hadhramaut

***Saudara* (Ind.)** Brother, sister

***Sayyid* (Ar. Ind.)** Descendants of Fatimah's son Husein

***Sayyidah* (Ar. Ind.)** Female descendants of Fatimah's son Husein

***Sunah* (Ar. Ind.)** Optional meritorious deeds and prayers

***Surat talak* (Ind.)** Divorce papers

***Syarif* (Ar. Ind.)** Descendants of the Prophet

***Syekh* (Ar. Ind.)** Member of social stratum in Hadhramaut (*shaykh*); in Indonesia also used for all non-*sayyid*

***Tanah air* (Ind.)** Homeland, fatherland

***Tanah air keagamaan* (Ind.)** Religious homeland

***Tanah air kelahiran* (Ind.)** Country of birth

***Tanah tumpah darah* (Ind.)** Country of birth, motherland

***Tasawuf* (Ar. Ind.)** Mysticism

***Tasbeh* (Ar. Ind.)** Formula extolling God's perfection

***Totok* (Ind.)** Full-blooded, newcomer (See *wulaiti*)

***Ulama* (Ar. Ind.)** Scholar of Islam, religious Muslim leader

***Volksraad* (D.)** Pseudo-parliament

***Vreemde oosterlingen* (D.)** Foreign orientals, foreign Asians, legal category in colonial times

***Wajib* (Ar. Ind.)** Obligatory

***Wijkmeester* (D.)** Quartermaster, assistant of *kapten Arab*

***Wijkenstelsel* (D.)** Quarter system, specified quarters for *vreemde oosterlingen*

***Wulaiti* (Ar.)** Newcomer, Hadhrami born in Hadhramaut

***Zakat fitri* (Ar. Ind.)** Tithe paid at the end of fasting month

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In *In Search of Identity: The Hadhrami Arabs in the Netherlands East Indies and Indonesia (1900–1950)* Huub de Jonge discusses changes in social, economic, cultural and national identity of Arabs originating from Hadhramaut (Yemen) in the Netherlands East Indies and Indonesia. Within the relatively isolated and traditionally oriented Hadhrami community, all sorts of rifts and divisions arose under the influence of segregating colonial policies, the rise of Indonesian nationalism, the Japanese occupation, and the colonial war. The internal turmoil, hardly noticed by the outside world, led to the flourishing of new ideas, orientations, loyalties and ambitions, while traditional values, customs, and beliefs were called into question.

Huub de Jonge, Ph.D. (1984), taught economic anthropology at Radboud University, Nijmegen, the Netherlands. He mainly published books and articles on the Madurese in Indonesia. Together with Nico Kaptein, he co-edited *Transcending Borders: Arabs, Politics, Trade and Islam in Southeast Asia* (KITLV Press, 2002).

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